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BELOW THE SALT.

A Nobel.

BY
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AUTHOR OF
"ROSEWARN," "SABINA," "ON CREDIT," "WILD WEATHER,"
"RULING THE ROAST," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
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BELOW THE SALT.

CHAPTER I.

"Thus from afar each dim discovered scene,
More pleasing seems than all the past has been."

WHEN the letter was written Margaret looked at her mother, who was searching the paper-case for a stamp—stamps were rarely purchased at the small house by the sea. No letters were written, for the outward world had been a blank to the three dwellers therein.

"Mother, let me take the note myself; there will be plenty of time before we have tea."

Pleasance hesitated. "My dear, it seems like forcing yourself on Mrs. Tyrie. I think there can be no occasion."

Margaret looked disappointed. "Papa's sister addressed herself to me first; she could not think I meant to intrude myself. We have so few relations. It seems to me that every one but ourselves lives in a little group of surroundings belonging to them, nearer or further distant."

"That is true," replied poor Pleasance. "You may take the note, and if they ask you to stay to tea, you had better accept the invitation," added Pleasance, with a gulp.

"Thank you, dear mother," replied Margaret, gaily going up to put on her hat and shawl. She looked in as she passed the door in descending, and nodded to Pleasance.

"How very beautiful she is!" thought her doating mother. "I cannot see the slightest likeness between Mrs. Tyrie and her dear brother." This she thought aggressively, for she had a dim consciousness that there was a likeness; but Mrs. Tyrie at three or four and thirty had become large, and somewhat resembled a full-blown rose. Pleasance remembered Edgar as a refined, dark-looking youth, with the down of eighteen still on his cheek. "As for calling that heavy-looking boy Edgar, it was absolute profanation," she said viciously. "Margaret will certainly be back to

tea. She knows—she must be conscious how I long for her company, how dull I am without her. She will be sure to come back,” Pleasance told herself, a little doubtfully. “Perhaps they will walk back with her.” This was a very disturbing reflection. “Mrs. Tyrie might not know anything of the early history of Pleasance. If she encouraged the intimacy, and discovered the truth afterwards, how angry she would be. It must not be. I could not bear that Margaret should know it.” The poor mother had now but one world, and that was Margaret’s heart. If she were dispossessed of that refuge she would give up every hope of happiness on earth, and long for the termination of a joyless life. She made up her mind that she would retire to her bedroom if Mrs. Tyrie returned with Margaret; then she could hear nothing of which she could complain.

As the clock drew towards six, the hands of Pleasance trembled over the plain work on which her fingers were occupied. Her heart was beating so fast.

“I am very foolish,” she said, “to think so much of my girl’s preferring a stranger’s company to mine; but she might think how lonely I am now my poor friend has left me.

I could have better spared Margaret three months since. How much of miserable life is spent in watching!" she thought.

She got up and looked along the esplanade, which was so long and so flat that figures walking were reduced in perspective to the size of miniature pins. She thought, as with the remembered sting of an asp, how she had looked along the well-worn pathway on that wretched day when she perceived one officer in naval uniform, when she and her friend had been watching for two.

She went back to her work, weeping over the remembrance of the misery then suffered, and of the removal of her companion in distress. She little thought then how much of the burden of her sorrow had been lightened by the neighbourhood of her friendly companionship in affliction. Were Mrs. Heathdale now sitting by her side, Margaret's absence would seem but a small vexation, which her return would dissipate in a few moments. But the real grief to the mother's heart was that her girl, knowing her loneliness, did not sympathise with her and remove it.

"But people never do seem to care for suffering which has never touched themselves," said poor Pleasance to herself, on whom this

fact had dawned. "They may say they do, but they try to administer consolation in a blind, blundering sort of way, which proves that they know nothing of the smart of the wretches' suffering whom they try to aid."

Pleasance watched the hand of the time-piece, travelling towards seven instead of six, with a heart which ached with its petulant injuries. Sally brought up the tea.

"Miss is late, mum ; shall I make it ?"

"No, I thank you, Sally ; I will wait till she comes."

Sally gave a "humph," and retreated.

Margaret always attended to the lamp herself, because the shopman from the establishment from which it had been purchased had shown the young lady how to attend to it ; and the girl, proud of her monopoly of information, declined to allow any one to touch it but herself. There were candles in the room, but Pleasance would not light them. "It will make it seem so much later than it really is," she said ; and so she waited in the dusk, becoming sadder and more dreary as the night drew on.

At length she became alarmed at Margaret's absence. Where could her girl be ? And she went down and walked to the end of

the garden, and looked along the lighted esplanade, to distinguish, if possible, that graceful, elastic figure, whose gait was as that of a wood-nymph. But she waited long in vain, and was just returning to put on her bonnet and shawl and go in search of Margaret, when she saw her coming, sometimes in light, but oftener in shadow, like the course of human life.

"Were you looking for me, mother?" said the unconscious truant. "I had no idea it was late." And Pleasance was so happy in the reunion with her child, that she forgot all the previous waiting and hours of disappointment.

"Oh, the lamp! You have been sitting in the darkness because you could not manage to trim and fill it," said the girl.

"No, not that; but when the room is lighted it makes the time seem longer."

"And you have not had any tea?"

"No; I waited, and waited, till it seemed too late."

"Never too late to be comfortable; let us have some now."

"Not for me, Margaret."

"Ah! but I should like some myself."

CHAPTER II.

"We never feel another's pain
Till comes our turn that pain to bear ;
Happy are those who, not in vain,
Thus taught, for alien griefs can care."

MARGARET pulled the bell imperiously.

"Bring tea," she said, when Sally answered the summons.

"Tea! at nine o'clock!" said the old servant. "What are you thinking about, Miss Margaret? The fire has been out for an hour."

"You knew, Sally," retorted the young lady, "that mamma had had no tea. Why did you let the fire out?"

"Is it likely that I should think of my missus, when you didn't think of your ma, miss? You leave her to sit alone in the dark all the evening, and then you expect me to

keep the fire alight for her that you don't take any count on. I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself, Miss Margaret."

"Mamma did not mind being alone," asserted Margaret, rather conscience-stricken. "Did you, mamma?"

"Not very much, dear," was the tremulous answer of her mother, who was fearful that her voice would break into a sob if she said much.

"You hear, miss," said the old servant, going down stairs.

"Mother," said Margaret, "I am so sorry! I was very selfish to leave you; but—you see—I thought I might hear something about Cassilis, if I went."

"Yes, dear; it was very natural. I do not complain. You see, probably Sally was tired and wanted to go to bed, and did not like the trouble of lighting the fire again. I hope Mrs. Tyrie was civil to you."

"Oh! most kind. I will tell you all about it. I asked if she was at the hotel, and told the waiter to say Miss Petrel had called with a note. She followed the man down, and said, 'Pray come up;' so I followed her, and she opened the note, and asked me a great number of questions about the naval instruc-

tion. Then she said that my coming was quite a godsend ; she was so dull—so tired of looking at the portrait of George the Third, with his sheep-looking outline, and at Queen Charlotte's stiff flounces. 'Then,' said she, 'Edgar and I looked out of window, and agreed that I should count all the men who passed in a quarter of an hour, and he all the women ; but we fell out because he insisted on counting all the children as females, and declared that he could see no difference between the hats and bonnets. We were just going to the tutor's assistant to do a few sums when you were announced.' 'I am glad I arrived in time to prevent such a dreary termination to Edgar's day,' said I. 'I do not think he is very backward,' said Mrs. Tyrie ; 'one of his father's clerks has got him well up in book-keeping.'

" 'Are you a good arithmetician yourself, Aunt Mary ?' I asked. Mrs. Tyrie nodded. 'I can add, subtract, and multiply,' she said, with a grave look. 'Any further accomplishment I leave to my younger sister, whom you resemble in a remarkable degree.'

" 'I have heard of Miss Margaret Petrel,' I said. (I wanted her to talk about her, you know, mamma.)"

Mrs. Petrel nodded.

“‘She is my aunt as well as you : it is strange to have an aunt of my own age.’ ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘and both Miss Margaret Petrels.’ ‘No,’ I replied, ‘I am Miss Petrel—the daughter of the eldest son. You were Miss Petrel till you became Mrs. Tyrie.’ She laughed, and said I was very sharp.

“She held your note a long time in her hand, and seemed to be thinking of it all the time she was talking, so that occasionally she talked disjointedly: nonsense in fact. At length she said : ‘Did your mamma write this?’ ‘Yes, of course mamma wrote it,’ I said, wondering what she meant. She said, looking a little ashamed, ‘I thought if your mamma was busy or tired, you might have written it for her.’

Pleasance grew crimson, and looked down in silence.

“What did you say?” she murmured at length.

“I replied that I could not write as well as that : my hand was not so well formed, and not so finished altogether. Then Mrs. Tyrie said she had seldom seen such beautiful writing as that in the note you had sent her. Then we drew the ugly leaden ink bottle

up close, and began trying to imitate your writing. Mrs. Tyrie said it was important that Edgar should learn to write correctly, for the examiners were very particular about that, and spelling and punctuation.

“I wanted to get her back to my namesake, and so I asked if Miss Margaret Petrel were going to marry Mr. Forrester. She looked at me curiously, and said, ‘Who could have told you that?’ but I observed that she did not deny it. I said that we knew a gentleman who had been staying at Abbotsland, and who said that it was so reported. ‘I cannot tell you,’ she answered. ‘I believe it is the wish of the sisters: the second Mrs. Petrel, my stepmother, and of Mrs. Seaward, the mother of Cassilis Forrester, but I believe the young folks have made no sign. Men seldom marry by the wishes of their parents; and boys are like billiard balls—hit them unskilfully with the cue, and they turn off at right angles, and tumble into the wrong pocket.’ ‘Do you like Mr. Cassilis?’ I asked. ‘*Well*, my dear! as Essex folks always begin when they are doubtful, or unable or unwilling to answer, he is very good looking and gentlemanlike in manner; very good in sentiment and conduct, but in

my own opinion somewhat of a prig. Probably it is the result of the over starching he has received in the education given him by his mother. If he live till fifty or sixty he will become more charitable to the shortcomings of others, and will find out that, strange as it may appear, we are not all cut out of one pattern.' 'Surely,' I said, 'a man cannot be too good.'

"Aunt Mary replied: 'you have not read of Burns' "unco guid," those to whom he addressed that beautiful precept—

"Then gently scan your brother man,
Far gentler sister woman,
Though they may gang a kennin' wrang
To step aside is human."

What do you think? Do you not agree with me?

"I said, 'I think Mr. Forrester is to be praised and not blamed: there is always a right and a wrong, and it does not seem to me desirable that one should blur the line of separation by countenancing those who step over the boundary. If so, why is the boundary there at all, if those are to be pitied and patted on the back who disregard it?'

" 'I think you are uncharitable, my niece.

It is impossible to judge exactly. Every case seems to me to stand alone. A man steals a loaf. His children are starving, and the result of that theft is that he goes to jail, but the lives of the children are saved.'

" 'Now, auntie,' said I, 'you have puzzled me, and if I see any gold glittering through your bead purse, and abstract it, you will only have to thank yourself; but we are very uninteresting to Edgar. Poor boy! how he does yawn.' Then Mrs. Tyrie rang for tea, and begged me to stay and talk to her, and have some myself. She said that she was so accustomed to a large party at meal-times that she felt quite dull with only Edgar."

"I wonder what she would have felt had she spent the evening quite alone?" said Pleasance, unable to withstand this one reference to her grievance, but Margaret did not hear or did not heed, for Sally entered at that moment with the kettle of boiling water, and cried: "Now, Miss Margaret, I have brought up the tea for your mamma's sake. You had better make it for her."

Margaret obeyed in silence. When Sally had gone down stairs again, she said, "That old woman becomes intolerable in her forwardness."

"Her impulses are kind ones," Pleasance replied, "and what is familiarity is in her the result of long affection. She set you on your feet, Margaret."

Margaret made no reply.

"Did Mrs. Tyrie say anything more?" asked the mother.

"I was thinking," said Margaret. "No. Only that Cassilis was expected home at the end of August to be ready for the shooting at Abbotsland on the 1st of September. On the 28th of August there is to be a county ball in the assembly room, at ———, which Miss Margaret Petrel will attend. Mrs. Tyrie told me that she always had her house full of people on these occasions."

"Did she ask you to join them?" enquired Pleasance.

"No, mamma," said the girl, sadly.

Pleasance was quite prepared to be angry any way: either if Margaret were or were not invited. She scolded herself for this irritability, and told her doubting and conscious heart that she wished her girl to have the pleasure, though she could not be there to see her enjoy it.

"After tea I said it was time to go home, and my aunt and Edgar said they would walk

part of the way home with me. They came within sight of the house, and I told them I was quite safe. I did not wish them to come up to the door lest I should be compelled to ask them in, and I doubted your liking such an incursion."

Pleasance said nothing. She did not believe Mrs. Tyrie had any intention of coming in. The question about the handwriting showed that she knew something of the want of education of her sister-in-law. She finished her tea in silence.

"Are you ill, mamma? You are so silent."

"I dare say, my dear, you find me dull after all your gay companionship with Mrs. Tyrie. I am going to bed. I am tired."

Margaret stayed a little while longer to think over her new relations before she followed her mother.

"Mamma is so dreary, so unsympathetic. I really believe she does not like my becoming acquainted with my own aunt."

On the following day Margaret went out for her usual walk, and Sally, who had watched for the closing of the door, came to the little breakfast-room, and dropping a curtsy, said—

"If you please, ma'am, when you can con-

veniently suit yourself, I wish to leave your service."

"Leave!" cried Pleasance in dismay.

She could find no words to express her amazement. In her opinion Sally was the only servant in the world—certainly the only one she had ever had. For nearly seventeen years Sally had made part of her life. In the opinion of Pleasance, Sally could do no wrong. At length she gasped out—

"Why?"

On this, Sally put her head first on one side and then on the other, and smiled, and looked down.

"If you please, ma'am, I am going to settle." ~

"To unsettle, I suppose," said Pleasance, utterly bewildered.

"To *marry*, ma'am. You see, ma'am, I am getting on in years now. I was eighteen just as I came to live with that dear saint that's gone. That is seventeen years past. Simon and I have been saving and saving; and we had just enough to marry when she gave me twenty sovereigns the night before she gave you the desk. Simon is going to be head gardener where he has lived ten years as second man. So he has got a nice gardener's house to live in; and I hope we shall be comfortable."

"Ah, Sally!" said Pleasance, "I hope you will be very happy. It seems so strange to me that your life—that is, the best part of it—is all to come, and mine is finished; and yet there is but little difference in our ages."

"Oh, don't say that, ma'am. There is that dear young lady—you will live your life again in her happiness when she marries."

"What can I do for a servant when you go?"

"I think I had better have one in before I go, to show her the ways of the house,—a young woman, for they are more teachable."

And thus it was settled.

A note was brought for Margaret by the postman that afternoon. These were the contents :—

"The Imperial Hotel.

"MY DEAR NIECE,

"I have just left Edgar with the tutor. He looked very watery about the eyes for a future hero. If you and your mamma would kindly allow him to go and see you occasionally, I should feel that you conferred a great kindness on me, and on him.

"I am very nervous about his passing, for his master does not speak very encouragingly

about the amount of information of which he is master.

“With best compliments to Mrs. Petrel,

“I remain, your affectionate aunt,

“MARY TYRIE.”

Mrs. Petrel said nothing when Margaret placed the note in her hand.

“You will not object to asking him, mamma? Indeed I do not see how it is possible to avoid doing so, in the face of such a request.”

“If you wish to undertake the entertainment of a dull, ugly boy, my dear, no one will interfere with your wishes, I am sure,” replied Pleasance.

“He is your nephew,” retorted the girl, “and my cousin.”

“Mrs. Tyrie seems to have remembered the relationship just when it is most convenient to her,” replied Pleasance, quietly.

She did not call the attention of Margaret to the fact that Mrs. Tyrie had not called on Pleasance. She feared lest the girl’s curiosity might lead her to inquiries difficult to answer.

CHAPTER III.

“The child clings tighter to its mother’s side,
Till steadier steps the broader path demands ;
Then when youth rushes onward to spring-tide,
From that loved clasp he tears his eager hand :
For the boy’s ear has caught the war-drum’s play,
And lover’s whisper lures the girl away.”

IN all small differences between the mother and the daughter, it was easy to predict in what way the decision would go. On the following evening the boy, looking more loutish because he felt more shy with a stranger, was seated in the little drawing-room, being fed with currant-cake and tea. Pleasance had always enjoyed this meal particularly. It was the concluding one of the day ; and the presence of the silent boy whom she disliked for his profaning the name of Edgar, and for the sandy hair and white eyelashes which were so unlike those of his uncle, spoilt the meal to her.

She thought how uncharitable she was ; and, reproving herself for the unworthy repugnance, she set herself to be courteous to the lad. When Pleasance made an effort of this kind she was irresistible : her voice was so soft, her tones so caressing.

When the tea-things were cleared away, the mother and the daughter set themselves to play at forming words with ivory letters. Mrs. Heathdale had found these very efficacious in teaching Pleasance and then Margaret. The letters had been collected in separate heaps, and added together before they were returned to the box, when they were no longer required. A small sum in arithmetic having thus been obtained.

Pleasance and Margaret contrived to give Edgar various lessons in this manner before they proceeded further. The clerk who had previously instructed him had taught him to write a neat hand ; and the boy, though dull, had the gift of unwearying patience, so that the teaching of these two ladies was a pleasure to him rather than a task. Pleasance grew accustomed to his white eyelashes, and did not raise any objection when Margaret asked him to spend the whole of Sunday with them.

"Genius is patience," says Buffon. I do not answer for the truth of this, but I believe one to be in a great degree inseparable from the other. The mind that has too much quickness ever to be taught has no chance of succeeding in any pursuit. The tortoise and the hare is true, mentally. Edgar Tyrie, silent, shy, loutish and dull, passed, six weeks after his residence at Plymouth, a far better examination than any of the other candidates. Margaret, who had in some sleight of mind mixed up his success with her reunion with Cassilis, obtained an opinion on the subject from the post captain, wrote off the joyful intelligence to her aunt, and received warm thanks and an invitation to go and stay with her for the county ball at the end of August. She carried the letter in a flutter of delight to her mother. Pleasance read it in silence.

"He will be there," she said.

"Very likely," replied the mother.

Margaret felt chilled by her mother's want of enthusiasm.

"Mamma is so unsympathetic," she thought.

"You would like to go, Margaret?"

"Why, of course I should like to go; but I will not go if it would displease you."

"No, it would not displease me," Pleasance

replied, gently; "only I do not see how you are to get there."

"Surely there would be no difficulty in our travelling together?"

"None whatever; only, you see, I am not asked, and if I were I should not go."

"Not asked? Aunt Mary could never have expected that I could go without you. She *must* mean to include you in the invitation."

"She may mean it, my dear, but she has not done it, and if she did I could not go."

"But why, mamma?" said the girl, flushed and irritated.

"Because, my dear, I am in deep mourning."

Margaret said no more; she was aware now that her little scheme of kindness to Edgar Tyrie had failed when its success seemed certain. She felt cut off from the legitimate enjoyments of her age, because her mother chose to mourn for her father such an unconscionable time as thirteen years.

She felt now doubly the loss of her kind godmother. It was hard that she should be deprived of the chance of seeing Cassilis again. In the perturbation of her disappointment she did not see that if Cassilis cared for her he would seek her society, and not be debarred by difficulties put in the way of his wishes.

"You seem quite down in the mouth, miss," said Sally to her young mistress, coming into the sitting-room unexpectedly, and seeing Margaret looking listlessly out of window, with her sewing fallen from her lap; "what is it, my dear?" for Sally forgot that it is more easy to satisfy a little miss who has broken the nose of a doll, or smashed a set of baby tea-things, than a great miss who grieves for the absence of a lover; and Sally flattered herself that her consolation would be as effectual when the object of it was sixteen as when she was six.

"It is nothing," said the young lady; "only Aunt Mary, the mother of Master Tyrie, has asked me to go to a ball and to stay at her house, and I can't go."

"Why not, miss?"

"Mamma will not go out because she is in mourning still for papa; and, Sally, I do think it is very hard on me, for mamma's mourning will not bring papa back, and I shall never have any one to care for me if I never see anybody."

That evening, when Margaret went upstairs a few minutes before her mother, Sally spoke to Pleasance. "Miss Margaret seems dull, ma'am; you should get her some young folks for company. We are but old for her, poor

lamb! You don't look over strong, ma'am, and if you should be taken away, that poor dear child would not have a single friend in the world, all because you keep yourself so close, and don't let her mix with young people like herself."

Pleasance made no reply, but she was much struck by the new light thrown on her daughter's feelings. It was quite true that Pleasance might die and leave Margaret unprotected and without ties in the world, and it was her duty, as a mother, to give her a chance of forming them for herself. There could be no impropriety in Margaret's appearing in society in company with her aunt, her father's sister. Pleasance tried to think that she ought to be very glad that Margaret should have such an advantage. She began to consider how it could be managed; and, full of a newly-conceived scheme, she went up after Margaret, and looked at her a moment as she sat at the dressing-table with her back turned to the open door, and a bit of her downcast face reflected in the looking-glass. What was revealed of the features announced deep dejection, and the fond mother was eager to remove it by giving Margaret hopes of the fulfilment of her wishes.

"Dear child," said Pleasance, "I have been

thinking how your visit to your aunt could be managed. If Sally would put off her marriage for a short time, and Mrs. Tyrie would receive her as your attendant, she could travel with you, and bring you back."

"Oh, mamma!" cried Margaret, with a sudden flash of light in her eyes, "is not all this like yoking a team of oxen to uproot a daisy? I suppose the gardener's permission must be obtained first?"

"Yes," Pleasance said, faintly; but in her newly recovered hope the girl did not perceive that the mother was wounded to the heart by the daughter's indifference to the loneliness consequent on her enjoyment. Then she reproached herself with want of sympathy with the enjoyments of youth, and remembered, with a pang, that her grandmother might have called for her often in her lonely hut when Pleasance was spending happy hours with Edgar on the beach, or even when, more absorbed, she was waiting, sad and anxious, for the waves to bring him to her feet.

"You shall write to your aunt to-morrow, dear, and ask if you may bring a maid; and if she accepts, which she is certain to do, for being wealthy she will not mind one more inmate, we will ask Sally."

CHAPTER IV.

‘Thoughtless the smiles that lit her face,
Whilst mine was sad with gathering tears,
Her step was light with girlish grace,
Mine heavy with portentous fears.”

THAT night Pleasance sat up in the bed and wept, and gazed fondly on the placid face of her girl, whose last thought of hope and pleasure had left a smile on her young features just relaxing into the langour of repose.

Then the mother buried her tear-stained face in the pillow which she crushed up close to her with a spasm of mental anguish. Other mothers might look forward to their girls going out into the world—to her it meant, probably, total severance and disgrace. What should she do should Margaret discover her mother’s early history? What a blight it would cast on her young life! yet Pleasance could not deprive her of the chances of mar-

riage, to which all girls look forward, whether they express it or not.

The visit must be paid. Margaret's step was light when she arose the following morning. "Mother," she cried, "if I write by the early post, Aunt Mary will get the letter to-morrow morning, and I may receive her answer by mid-day post on Thursday."

Pleasance smiled and said, "Yes—probably."

Mrs. Heathdale had insisted on Margaret's writing her a letter every week ; first a foul copy, which the elder lady corrected carefully ; then a revised one, where every word, every stop, every line, occupied exactly the right place on the paper. "I wish you, if called on suddenly to write a letter, to have that facility which only custom can give," she used to say ; "and though you look very rebellious now at being obliged to put down your Italian grammar, you will thank me some day for having insisted on your expressing yourself on paper neatly and grammatically, without effort or previous thought."

Margaret had no trouble, therefore, in writing to her aunt, and having done so, and carried the letter to the pillar-post, she returned to sit with her mother at breakfast-time, and eat the bread and butter provided for her by Pleasance's deft fingers.

Presently the girl's dark eyes sought her mother's face. "Mamma, what can be done about a dress?—a ball-dress I mean?"

Pleasance had a delicate taste in dress, but knew nothing of fashions. "My dear, we must ask Madame Villebois. My own idea of a beautiful dress is one which I saw at Madame's ball. A thick material like gauze, over white satin." Pleasance saw that her girl was determined on going, and now the mother was getting nervous lest any circumstances should interfere with the proposed pleasure. "When we get an answer we will call on Madame Villebois."

"It will cost a good deal?" said the girl, doubtfully.

"Yes, it will; but I hope it may give you great pleasure."

"Oh! of that I am sure," replied the girl; "only I wish you were going with me."

"You must write and tell me all about it, on your return from the gay doings," said the mother, trying to think and speak cheerfully.

The permission came in due course, but with less warmth than was expected by both the mother and daughter, after the kindness they had lavished on the boy. In truth the lady's-maid was a stumbling-block and rock of

offence which Mrs. Tyrie had not anticipated, though she felt that she might have done so.

A widow lady, young, rich, and pretty, found that her friends were unwilling to receive her to stay at their houses, or if they did so, it was with the reservation of King Richard regarding Lady Ann, "I'll have her, but I will not keep her long." As she was a shrewd person, she set about to find out the cause, and leaving her lady's-maid at home, she took her footman out with her when she visited her friends.

The result was, she assured the writer, that she never could go sufficiently often nor stay sufficiently long.

Besides the difficulty of lodging them, those creatures, so "fine by defect and beautifully weak," require more luxuries and attention than their ladies, and generally find out the peccant points in the domestic management to retail to their mistresses when attending their toilettes. Besides this Mary did not want to produce an apple of discord to her father's family. She had no great love for her sister Margaret, whom she considered to be greatly indulged, not to say spoilt, and on that ground she was not unwilling to take her niece to the county ball, and in this second

Margaret show so great a rival to the first; but she felt that questions might be asked about the living mother which it might be unsatisfactory to hear and unpleasant to evade; she thought she had personally managed exceedingly well to avoid all intercourse with the widow Petrel, excepting a few unpremeditated words one day in a library.

Now had poor Edgar lived and the woman died, no one would have inquired who Mr. Petrel's son had married, but here was the father dead and the mother over whom so dense a cloud of obloquy rested, alive to throw a shadow over the life of the beautiful daughter.

"Really, if that woman had any notion of the duty she owes to her daughter, she would efface herself from existence. There are many ways not so very unpleasant," thought Mary, who enjoyed life exceedingly herself.

However, her niece was coming and she must make the best of it. She supposed she need not keep her very long, but this was a small consolation, for the young lady was so handsome and distinguished, that questions were sure to be asked if she were once introduced at a county ball.

Margaret's outfit was completed. Pleasance

gave herself the pleasure of dressing her girl once in the shining garments, and seeing how her beauty bore the sharp glare of day in her evening dress.

Her love occupied itself in preparations of everything Margaret could possibly want, and when all was ready, she had to combat the reluctance of Sally to leave her old mistress for the young one. The new girl, Louisa, had been engaged to come, and at the last moment Sally wanted to send her in her place. The pleasure of a change of scene had first induced Sally to consent, but the conviction of the discomfort and dullness to accrue to Pleasance came on Sally, so vividly, on seeing the way in which Louisa swept out the middle of the kitchen, leaving the accumulation of dust in the corners, that she said it overcame her quite.

Pleasance gently assured her that she could not trust Margaret to the care of a girl who left unswept corners. That to no one but herself could she entrust a charge so precious.

Neither Pleasance, Margaret, nor Sally knew anything about travelling, this ignorance disturbed the two elder women, who regarded the railway engine, seen and heard at a dis-

tance, as a ramping and a roaring lion seeking whom it might devour. Margaret, with the happy trust of ignorance took it for granted that it would all turn out to be easy enough, when tried.

Luckily for the three helpless women, Jack Knight called, and said he had been invited by Cassilis to meet him at X—— to go to the ball, and as he had heard from his mother, who had learnt it from Madame Villebois, that Miss Petrel was going also, he had come to see if he could be of any service.

Pleasance accepted his escort for Margaret eagerly, for she distrusted Sally's experience in railway travelling, though in dusting corners she was unrivalled. Margaret, though she remembered the sting of the last pain his chatter had inflicted, was not sorry to see some one who had heard from Cassilis, and accepted his civilities with courtesy.

He had come to the house, and waited in the breakfast-room till the last cup of tea had been drunk. Margaret was looking bright and hopeful, her mother pallid and resigned. They embraced, and Pleasance said, "You will write as soon as you arrive?"

"My dear lady! do not be alarmed at getting a telegram. I will telegraph as soon

as I have deposited Miss Petrel in the house of her aunt."

"And you *will* take care of her getting in and out of the carriages."

"Certainly," replied Jack, gravely; "and I will not suffer her to lean against the doors."

Margaret's face was beaming with hope and expectation. She felt that she ought to be feeling sad in leaving her mother alone, but she was elated, and no shadow clouded her spirits, she was going into another county, to see new scenes, new people, and Cassilis; she was very wicked, she feared, not to care more for leaving poor mamma. Sally looked much more sad than she did, she knew; but Sally was leaving the neighbourhood of the man she loved, and Margaret was about to see him who had professed to love her.

CHAPTER V.

"The days of my affliction have taken hold on me."

PLEASANCE had leaned out of the window till the carriage containing her daughter had disappeared, then listlessly she moved to the table where her cup had not been filled, and Margaret's was left partly empty with a miserable sloppy appearance in the saucer.

She sat down and poured out some of the cold dark-looking tea, too unhappy and careless of her own comfort to order the water in the tea-kettle to be freshly boiled, to make her any more breakfast. She looked at the time-piece, a quarter to nine! "How shall I manage to get through the days and nights till she return?"

She remembered that she might be hungry before one o'clock, having arisen at six to see

everything properly arranged up to the last moment for Margaret's packing, so she took a bit of the toast made for her daughter, and left by her in her eagerness to go off. I wonder if young birds ever return to the nest, she pondered, and memory brought to her mind a wind-beaten cliff, in one of the recesses of which she idled one summer morning instead of going to meeting, and watched the mother gull tempting her newly-fledged brood to try their pinions on the warm air. They made short circles and returned, but never to the nest resting on a point of rock near it. She guarded them till they were strong enough to need her care no longer, and then forgot them, and next year she took another mate.

" But this was taught me by the dove
To die, and know no second love."

The poor mother doubted whether, now that she had what was to her wealth and every worldly comfort, she was not more unhappy than when she had been half-starved and weather-beaten on the Cornish mine, looking out over the tumbling waters to watch for the boat that came not. Then she was fifteen; now she was thirty-two, nearly thirty-three.

She thought of Sally with a sad smile. Her happiness was now to begin : her new home furnished by years of thrift ; her husband endeared by constancy and faith ; all were to encircle her with an atmosphere of tranquil bliss. Yet she was older than Pleasance, whose life was like the lingering existence of a flower crushed in the highway of life. Her self-pity on this subject did not long endure. The silence of the house recalled her to a sense of its terrible loneliness. She sent away the unenjoyed breakfast, and went to the drawing room. The piano was open, and the music on the stand. It was an Italian song, speaking of the sufferings of expectation. There was a withered flower on the table, which Margaret had left to die. She might as well have let it bloom a little longer, she thought ; but young people do not care what they inflict.

Women have a great resource in needle-work. All that was required by the small household was done by Pleasance, who valued the skill which was acquired with difficulty comparatively late in life. It had been her custom to sit and sew till one o'clock, whilst Margaret read aloud to her : sometimes translating as she went from German or Italian ; sometimes reading good English authors.

Strangely enough the translations from the Greek tragedies interested the ci-devant mine girl more than Shakespeare. The silence of the sufferers under profound suffering seemed so much more natural than any words could be. Now the books were all at hand there was nothing to prevent her reading them herself; but they wanted voice and sympathy. She had lived a double life since she had had a daughter, but the time had come when the girl had sought her own happiness. She was determined to occupy herself, for she knew that the hours spent in idleness would be interminable in their duration. "It is well that I have never afforded myself a sewing machine," she thought: "I should finish too soon."

The cold meat and hot potatoes, which would have once been so greedily devoured, did not occupy much of Pleasance's time. The potatoes being hot gave her most satisfaction, for, like all water-drinkers, she preferred the stimulus of heat. Then came the afternoon: she would walk out and visit a few poor people; they would be glad to see her, for a visit meant a gift. She lingered, on leaving the threshold of each poor dwelling, unwilling to face the loneliness of her home.

The next day she hoped she should have a

telegram from Mr. Knight, to say that Margaret had reached X—— in safety, to vary the sameness of the long hours ; as she strolled home, she saw Louisa leaning over the garden wall, talking to the baker's boy. She stopped, and looked steadfastly at a coming cabriolet, as if she were waiting for a recognition from its occupants, that she might not detect the culprit. "Poor girl!" she thought, "she is probably feeling the wrench from her own people, and yearns for companionship, standing alone amidst the alien pots and kettles." In her capacity as mine girl, Pleasance would have thought Louisa's lot a happy one, because she lived amongst the flesh pots. Now, she knew that the hunger and thirst of the animal frame is not the only hunger which may be suffered.

That which Pleasance felt for companionship was gnawing into her very heart. She longed to tell Louisa to come up and have some tea with her, and tell all about her home, her wishes, her small troubles, and smaller joys ; but she did not do this, because she knew that the differences in their stations would preclude confidence, and that Louisa would only have been wretched, felt awkward, spilled the tea, or committed some

infringement of that politeness which had become necessary to the comfort of the former mine girl.

The evening seemed endless. About nine o'clock Pleasance rang for Louisa, and after reading to her a chapter in the Testament, she gave her three verses to learn by heart, telling her that if she would learn twenty-one verses by that day week of her mistress's selection, she would give her a fourpenny bit. The verses were to be learnt every evening, and repeated by Louisa to herself the last thing before she slept and the first thing on awaking. Pleasance knew by experience how this plan impressed subjects on the mind. Louisa was inclined to rebel at this at first: she did not see why missus should want her to learn such godly things; but she was not otherwise than comfortable in her new place, and ladies had their whims, and must be indulged, she supposed.

The greatest pang to Pleasance was in looking at Margaret's empty bed.

"Dear child!" she cried. "I wonder if she is missing me as I pine for her. I wish I loved her less, for I cannot but be wretched in her absence."

Pleasance buried her fair head in her hands, and, kneeling, prayed for her absent daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

“Thou hast no sorrow in thy soul :
No winter in thy year.”

LOGAN.

IN the meantime Margaret was proceeding on her first journey. She was thankful to Jack Knight for taking her tickets, and delivered her purse into his hands, begging him to pay what was right. He fee'd the guard out of his own pocket to give them an empty carriage, and seated himself opposite the young lady that he might have the pleasure of watching her beautiful face. Margaret at first looked out of the window for the amusement of watching a fresh landscape, but buildings, trees, meadows, and hedgerows soon began to rush by her in such mad rapidity, that she at first closed her eyes, and then, when recovered from the giddiness of the unaccustomed motion, she wisely fixed

them on the opposite side of the carriage, not finding that the study of Jack's blob nose was as satisfactory as he seemed to consider the classic contour of hers.

After a little time Jack thought he ought to amuse himself ; so he took from his pocket several letters, contriving that the writing of one should be very evident to Margaret. She looked at it with the same indifference as the rest, and, rather disappointed, Jack said, "Are you a judge of handwriting, Miss Petrel?"

"I may have my own fancies," replied the girl, "but I don't pretend to be a judge."

"What do you think of that writing?" Jack said, putting one of the letters into her hand.

She saw the thin paper on which her father's letters used to be written and the foreign post-mark—Firenze, and flushed a little, believing that it was from Cassilis.

Jack had the impression from her blushing that she knew the handwriting of his friend from corresponding with him, and felt unhappy at the result of his investigation.

"What do you think of it?" he persisted.

"Do you remember," replied the girl, "the safe criticism retreated to by the Vicar of

Wakefield, when required to give an opinion of the family portrait: 'The picture would have been better had the painter taken more trouble with it.' I say that if the writer of the address had done it more carefully the result would have been more admirable."

"You are hard to please, Miss Petrel," said Jack, very well satisfied, however, that Margaret had not praised the writing of Cassilis.

"Handwriting speaks volumes quite independent of the words it conveys," he added.

"In what way?"

"Fancy me engaged in a love correspondence. Can you?"

"Of course," said Margaret, smiling and bowing.

"*I* begin it of course. The gentleman always does so, or he ought."

"Ought he?" asked Margaret anxiously.

"But if he do not?"

"Oh!" said Jack laughing a little maliciously, "if he do not it is past praying for."

"Pray go on," said Margaret a little out of countenance. "How do you bring your handwriting into play?"

"In the first place I get a goose-quill pen."

"As being most suited to the subject," said the girl, slily.

"Not exactly ; there is great art in nibbing a pen ; in the beginning of a love correspondence, the nib should be a fine one to suit the perfection of the well-turned sentences and the carefully formed letters ; then one begins at a reasonable space from the top, not too high as if the paper would run short under the lengthiness of one's pretty speeches, nor so low as to indicate their possible paucity. As the passion, and consequently the correspondence becomes more eager and animated, the writing begins at the top of the page, the nib of the pen is broader, the quantity of ink thrown into the letters greater and blacker. Could a man exist weak enough to write a passionate love letter in pale ink ?"

"Oh ! I shall know when my time comes, after these hints," said Margaret laughing. "Pray go on."

"Well ! the course of true love goes smooth, and being uninterrupted it does not proceed briskly, but rolls itself lazily along. Now a change takes place in the writing. The lover begins low down in the page, with a dreadful feeling of poverty in his heart and brain. Perhaps also in his pocket, but that

is of little consequence compared to the other lacking in this state of affairs. The letters refuse proximity. 'My dear,' is pulled out more than half across the note paper. The lines, too, have more than a comfortable space between them; the paper is coarse. If the recipient finds this to be the case in page number one, when she turns over she will find an excuse that a business engagement precludes the possibility of the writer's doing more than sign himself, yours truly, &c., &c., &c. And thus ends this sad eventful history."

Margaret looked very grave, there was a tone of banter about Mr. Jack Knight in speaking of love which was very irksome to a young lady of somewhat romantic ideas. Her imagination had been nourished by facts; her father and mother, both young and beautiful, had each married a first love, and the father dying nobly in saving others, the fair young widow had mourned for him, in garb and in heart, for thirteen years. There was a sacredness about such affection which made Margaret shrink when any semblance of it was attacked by ridicule, and undervalued. It seemed to her like making a brazen representation of a pure golden image,

which seemed to be made common by the vile imitations of it."

"You seem thoughtful on the subject, Miss Petrel. I am afraid I do not amuse you?"

"Oh! not at all; I never had a love-letter, never any letter in my life excepting two from a relation, and if your account be true, and after the neatly written expressions of true love the letters are to become slovenly signs of indifference, I had rather never have one when its successor after a time must end so disgracefully."

" 'All things must suffer change,'

Shelley says, Miss Petrel. Take the most exquisite perfume in the world, that of the orange flower; long before it fades one becomes insensible of the beauty of its scent; and knows not whether it be near us or not."

" 'They sin who tell us love can die,' "

replied the girl with her dark eyes filling with enthusiastic tears. "That was the dictum of a man who besides being a fine writer was admirable in every relation of life, a good husband, a good father, a good friend, a man who could judge of the duration of earthly love and knew by experience that self-sacrifice on earth and constancy will live for ever in heaven."

CHAPTER VII.

"The bridegroom's letters stand in rows above,
Tapering yet stout, like pinetrees in a grove."

"WHEN beautiful lips reprove me, even when they utter high flown fallacies, I bow, and wish to be convinced, even if I am not," said Jack Knight. "But to return: you have not told me what you think of the writing of my correspondent."

"I think it is a good hand: rather formal," replied Margaret. "That is more pleasant to me," she continued, pointing to another.

"Ah! you were seduced into approbation by a glimpse of the coronet on the seal when I turned it over just now."

"No, I assure you not. I have not seen it: now I should like to look at the crest and motto; mottoes are so agreeable; they carry one back into regions of romance."

Jack gave her the letter, and she pondered over the motto : "Strong against strength." The crest—an oak tree swept over by a tempest, but unbent.

"It is strange to me," said Margaret, "and probably because I am influenced by the motto, but I think there is a certain defiance in the cut of the letters which echoes to the epigraph. In one writer I should fancy the feeling to be : 'What I do shall be above the criticism of my fellows, in its perfection ;' of the peer—'I write as I please, if well, to satisfy my taste ; I am indifferent to the world's opinion.' "

"How do you come at all that, Miss Petrel ?"

"By the tails of his d's and the sweep of the pen in the capital C's ; in the deep cut of the strokes coming often in the wrong places."

"Bless me !" cried Jack, "Lord Burleigh's shake of the head was simple in all the meanings it conveyed, compared to your interpretations of trifles—light as air. But trifles form the sum of human things, Hannah Moore says."

"Poor dear woman !" I have rather a feeling of repulsion from her, because my godmamma, Mrs. Heathdale, always gave me 'Cœlebs in Search of a Wife' to read as a Sunday book."

“ But now I have been a spae wife to you as to handwritings, the least you can do is to tell me whether I have riddled you aright.”

“ It seems to me,” said Jack, speaking, but not replying, “ that if your reading be the right one of the characters of these men, that of my Florence correspondent must be the safest and best ; for a man who dreads the censure of the world will generally take good care to avoid the possibility of falling under it ; whilst he who follows his own idea of right, and is careless of the judgment of mankind, is not unlikely to go astray when his inclination becomes stronger than his power of self-control.”

Margaret pondered at this sentiment, and then she said : “ The judgments of mankind are often wrong. What admiration, then, must that man excite, who lifts the testimony of his single voice against that of a multitude. The man who does this is exalted above humanity. If a single cry had been raised in defence of that unfortunate policeman murdered by the Paris mob, the fury of the populace might have been stayed.”

“ Oh ! but I do not mean on such occasions. I appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober.”

"To the deliberate judgment of society, not to a passion-stirred mob."

"The deliberate judgment of society seems to come when the objects of it are past its ken :

'The right ear that is filled with dust
Knows nothing of the false or just.'"

"It can be small comfort to the unfortunate Frenchman, broken on the wheel on suspicion of theft, to have his memory cleared, when folks have forgotten that he ever lived."

"Here is the station: shall I get you a railway novel? We have been like

'The fox and the cat as they journeyed one day,
Who, with moral discourses, cut shorter the way.'

I will not promise to be amusing all the way to X——, so you had better accept my offer."

"But do you consider you have been amusing hitherto?" asked Margaret, simply. "It seems that we have been dreadfully didactic. Perhaps a novel will be better than any more of it. But you have not told me the names of your correspondents, and I should like to know them."

"Wait a moment," said he, jumping out and returning with "Pride and Prejudice," and an armful of newspapers. "There! you may be independent of my powers of amuse-

ment now ! 'The names ?' One is from Cassilis Forrester ; the other is from Lord Lorimer. You may read that one," he cried, opening it. "I knew him slightly, and he wrote to ask me the character of one of my father's servants, who is ambitious to become his valet. I hope he may prove a hero to him, Miss Petrel ; he ought to be one, if your reading of his handwriting be correct."

Margaret took the note, feeling like a child who has a plain bun given him, when he has been longing for a plum one. She wanted to know whether Cassilis had said when he was coming home, and if the letter had any mention of her. He knew that Jack Knight lived in her neighbourhood, and might see her every day if he chose ; she must see him soon.

The ball would take place in less than a week, and then she should see so many people on whom her happiness depended : Forrester, his mother, his stepfather, Margaret, her namesake and rival ; then there was her grandpapa. Of course he must be fonder of his own Margaret than of her. She had heard that men sometimes loved their grandchildren best, but that must be when they see them as very young children.

In all these speculations Margaret could not give much thought to the mother who spent the heavy hours in pining for her companionship. She had an under current of self-reproach going on in her mind, for not being more occupied by remembrance of her loneliness. "It will not be for very long: after the ball I will go back to her."

Alas ! for good resolutions.

It was late in the evening before they reached X——, and Jack Knight, leaving his own luggage, ran out to see if any conveyance had been sent for Miss Petrel. In a handsome carriage, well appointed, he caught sight of the lady he had seen at Plymouth, when she was there with her son, and, having given over Margaret, Sally, and their respective luggage, he went to the telegraph office to give Pleasance the pleasure of knowing of the safe arrival of her child.

As he deposited himself in a cabriolet to proceed to Abbotsland, he found himself whistling—

"I ne'er could any beauty see
In eyes that did not look on me."

"She is beautiful, but she is too clever—too independent. I declare there is something

more attractive in the somewhat faded softness of the mother."

In the meantime Margaret was kindly welcomed by her aunt, who hurried the footman up with the luggage to the dressing-room of her bedroom.

"Shall my maid help you to unpack, my dear? Pray get ready as soon as you can, for the first dinner-bell has been rung, and if anything can vex Harry, it is being kept waiting for his dinner."

Sally was equal to the emergency, and five minutes before the second dinner-bell sounded, Margaret was dressed in clear muslin, and looked handsome and distinguished in spite of the unusual fatigue of travelling. The dinner party consisted of four persons—Mr. and Mrs. Tyrie, Margaret, and a tall, slim, fair young man, very silent and very blond. The conversation, or rather the talking, was all done by Aunt Mary, and as she descanted on a subject on which she was eloquent—the perfections of Edgar Tyrie—it was safe to decide that she was very happy in her discourse. Margaret could put in a word of confirmation now and then, as she had aided her mother in efforts for his education. Sometimes a few sentences were exchanged between

Mr. Tyrie and his junior partner, which might as well have been uttered in Arabic, for any information they conveyed to the ladies. After partaking of an excellent dessert, which was very tempting to Margaret, and when she had declined to take any fluid stronger than water, Mrs. Tyrie gave her the signal to come to the drawing-room.

"There," she said, when she had deposited her niece in an easy chair, "is not that comfortable? And now tell me, What do you think of him?"

"Of whom, aunt?—of my uncle? He seems very kind and good-natured. I think I shall love him dearly, in time."

"Nonsense, girl! I don't want you to go loving your uncle. It is not the fashion in this country. It was all very well for Peter Paul Rubens; but I mean Mr. Franklin. Do you know the firm is Tyrie and Franklin? He is our junior partner. A bachelor, my dear, wants a wife. I thought, when I saw you, how nice it would be: Tyrie and Franklin—aunt and niece—you so dark, he so fair."

"Oh, aunt! I hope you did not tell him of your plan!"

"No, my dear, no. Men are like boars: try to drive them in one direction, and they

drag themselves just in an opposite one. So I only give you a hint to be agreeable."

"How can I be agreeable, aunt?" said Margaret, laughing, "when I do not know his tastes!"

"Oh! you will soon find them out. Harry and I soon found we were of one mind, and the trouble I had is sad to think of even now. My stepmother was such a cat. She is civil enough now that I want nothing, but can beat her in dress and equipage any day. I manage to make your grandpapa happy when she is out of the way. Poor papa! he wants money, or he would never have married her."

CHAPTER VIII.

“Friendship balmy words may feign,
Love’s are e’en more false than they;
Oh ! ’tis only music’s strain
Can sweetly soothe, and not betray !”

“THE men will come up presently. There, try the piano, she continued, opening a magnificent instrument, by Broadwood.

Margaret thought she would see how the room suited her voice, and began, “O Luce di quest’ anima,” which she followed by “Chi nacq’al rimbomba.” The gentlemen came in silently, as she finished the triumphal burst at the final note of the latter ; and when it was concluded, her uncle applauded loudly. Mr. Franklin walked timidly up to the piano ; and on Margaret asking him if he sang, he turned the leaves of a music-book, till it remained open at—

"I would that my love could silently
Flow in a single word."

He sang it tenderly and sweetly, with perfect correctness of ear, and thanked Miss Petrel for her accompaniment when he had finished. Margaret smiled to think how well the song seemed to suit his character, in its reticence. She looked pleadingly at its conclusion at her aunt, for the night was far more advanced than she had ever been accustomed to spend it out of her bed, and she was rather giddy from the unaccustomed motion of the railway carriage. Her aunt understood the appealing look, and took her off to her room.

"We sleep not far off; you will not be timid, Margaret?"

Margaret said she was not afraid; but she longed to say that she should like Sally to lie on the sofa in the dressing-room; but she was too shy; and after inquiring at what time she should be ready for breakfast, she bade her aunt good-night, and sat down on the luxurious sofa, and thought of her mother with regret and bitter longing—thought of that dear, anxious face, which she would ever see sitting up in the bed watching her if she moved uneasily. She remembered with compunction how little her mother had occupied

her mind in all the novelty of travelling, and in her reception in her aunt's house. Surely she was an empty-headed, careless-hearted girl. She was ashamed of herself, and wept at her own want of feeling. Then she knelt and prayed for forgiveness, and knit her fingers together, as if asking pardon of the pale face in the distant lone bed-chamber, and longed to kiss the quivering eyelids, which, seemed ever heavy with unshed tears.

She slept at length, and was with Pleasance again in her dreams, with the same weary longing in her heart to meet once more with Cassilis. When she awoke early—for they had always breakfasted at eight o'clock at the small house by the sea—she looked with momentary wonder at the strange surroundings—the rich carpet, and the heavy curtains, and then thought, “I am so much nearer to *him*.” Then she arose, and began a long letter to Pleasance, undeterred by the dread of being too tedious—for what child can be so in writing to a mother?

She told of her aunt's kindness in providing everything she might or might not want, even to a possible lover; and described Mr. Franklin with the fairness of indifference. Aunt Mary, of course, did not wish to run counter

to the wishes of her stepmother and the mother of Cassilis, when their wishes probably were identical with those of grandpapa, and she would probably like the marriage of the junior partner of the firm to her niece. "But oh, mamma! there are only four whole days now and three nights before I see him again. Then I shall see my young aunt and rival. My heart beats faster, and I grow breathless as I write. I wonder if Cassilis knows yet that I am to be at the ball. I am speculating if they will ask me to the party at Abbotsland. Aunt Mary is going. I saw the invitation card on the drawing-room table in the china dish. Surely they cannot avoid asking me. What do you think, dear mamma? It is only three days after the county ball, and it would not keep me away from you much longer. Perhaps by that time Cassilis will have spoken to his parents, and I shall be engaged to him. This is too much happiness for me to expect. I wish he had a profession; money earned by one's self gives such independence of action. Mr. Franklin has a fine income already, though he is so young a man; but then he has worked hard for it, and is now all day in the counting-house, whilst Cassilis

'Can sing what heaven inspires,
And wander where he will'

in his journey through life.

"Aunt Mary says that men are best out of the house for the best part of the day, as uncle is; and she would not have him at home on any account. But for the morning service on Sundays, she does not know what she should do. But she is old, you know, mamma, as old as you are; though *you* never look old in my eyes. Old or young, I could never have too much of the company of Cassilis, were I married to him.

"I must get ready now to go down to breakfast; the dressing-gown you wadded for me is so comfortable, that I grudge throw it off for my morning frock. I hope Sally will come presently and brush the dust from the clothes I wore yesterday. I will write again before the post goes out, I wonder if Mrs. Tyrie reads prayers at eight o'clock."

After breakfast Mrs. Tyrie came to Margaret's bedroom and asked to see her ball-dress. Luckily she found nothing to disapprove. Everything connected with it was carefully scanned, and pronounced to be really very good. Then Margaret's opinion was required to decide on which of various

dresses, spread out for her inspection on her aunt's bed, should be worn at the county ball, and which at the fête at Abbotsland. Aunt Mary had forgotten when she asked Margaret the question, that she had not been invited, and that her aunt must hesitate as to taking her without an invitation, and doubted very much if she should obtain one under the circumstances. However, the opinion was given by the niece, honestly and with her usual cultivated taste, and the vexed question put aside for the present.

Margaret inquired about the post; and when the inspection of silks, satins, and gauzes was concluded, she finished her letter to Pleasance.

In the afternoon, Mrs. Tyrie took her niece with her, shopping, and was astonished to find that the only place where Margaret was disposed to linger, was at the booksellers, where she saw volumes which she longed to possess, for she liked to see her favourite authors well bound, as a lover might rejoice in the magnificent attire of his affianced wife.

Mr. Franklin did not dine with the party that evening, and Margaret felt as awkward as folks generally are, who come into a household where they are ignorant of the interests

of home, and cannot be a part of them. Her uncle regarded her kindly, and showed his appreciation of her beauty by giving her the best slices of his favourite dishes, and I do not know that the devotion of a middle-aged gentleman fond of good eating, could have been more satisfactorily shown. He wished he had some small talk ready, and on Margaret's asking her aunt if she had read "Adam Bede," he assured her that he had not, taking the question to himself, but that he had read "Zeluco:" it had belonged to his mother he said solemnly, and he had it given him when a boy. It was a comfort that Margaret knew all about it, and about its companion and supposed antidote—"Edward."

Mr. Tyrie had been impressed by the horrors of the first story, and was astonished at the preference Margaret declared for the second. Mary declared them both to be too dull for any one to read at the present day, in which opinion the world probably coincides. Margaret, however, was grateful to her god-mother's small collection of books which had helped to bridge over a tedious dinner. In the evening her uncle asked for the Italian songs she had sung on the previous night, and being a man determined to understand every-

thing "from the egg to the apple" as he said, Margaret had to translate the Italian and tell him the story, without which, he said, the harmonies were like those of a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, simply melodious noise.

He admired her performance so much that he kept awake for an hour longer than usual to listen to it.

On the following day Mr. Franklin again joined the trio at the dining table, and sang duets in the evening and one solo, "Adelaide." A revolution was taking place in the uncle's mind when Margaret's coming had been talked of as a painful duty, the result of Edgar's tuition by the ladies, mother and daughter, and Mary had suggested Margaret as a suitable match for Robert Franklin. Then Mr. Tyrie had felt inclined to think his partner would be thrown away on the daughter of a mine girl. Now he was fast coming to the conclusion that Margaret was far too great a prize for any man of his acquaintance.

CHAPTER IX.

“More than kin and less than kind.”

To the astonishment of Mrs. Tyrie she found that her husband meant to accompany her and her niece to the ball. He said privately to his wife, that the poor girl might want all the support relationship could confer ; and he should take care that his was not wanting on the occasion. There was another thought in his mind, there was a card-room next to the assembly room, and he hoped to play a rubber or two, whilst the young folks were dancing. On the evening before the ball, which was to take place on Monday, Mary knowing that her father would be home to take his Sunday duty, wrote and asked him to come to dine and sleep, judging he would prefer their home, to the lonely Rectory, as

Margaret and her stepmother were staying at Abbotsland.

Instead of waiting till dinner-time Mr. Petrel ordered his phaeton to await him at the church door, and arrived at X—— about six o'clock in the evening. Margaret was alone in the drawing-room, playing and singing to herself the fine piece of music "I will arise and go to my Father." Mr. Petrel going upstairs unannounced, stopped at the door with a sudden start believing that he saw his daughter, till the girl's voice melted into the exquisite tenderness of "Father! Father!"

"Bless my soul! *she* cannot sing," he cried; "yet such a likeness!"

The words ended mournfully, "I will arise and go to my Father—my Father," and Mr. Petrel waited without any movement till the last vibration of the music had ceased, then a slight noise made her turn, and she arose and bowed politely, saying that her aunt Mrs. Tyrie, would be there in a few minutes.

Mr. Petrel was utterly confounded in the presence of this beautiful young relative who seemingly had no idea that she was in the presence of her grandfather, who had never acknowledged her existence.

Her respect for age, and her pity for the evident embarrassment of the visitor made her prodigal of small attentions ; she pushed the easiest of the easy chairs towards him, saying that it was the one her uncle generally occupied, and that on that ground it was likely to be the most comfortable.

Then she placed the weekly papers near him, and asked him whether he took much interest in agriculture, and the struggle going on between labour and property. She knew nothing of their relationship, and her ignorance and the sweetness with which she was trying courteously to amuse him and dissipate his evident embarrassment touched his conscience if not his heart.

“ May I ask the name of the young lady I have the honour of addressing ?” he said.

“ My name is Petrel—Margaret Petrel.”

“ May I ask after whom you were called Margaret ?”

“ After my grandmother, I believe ; I never knew her, though.”

“ Ah ! had you been a boy you would have been called Jasper, no doubt,” said Mr. Petrel, consoling himself that his dead wife had the honour of a grandchild named after her, and he had not.

"I do not know," said the girl, gravely ;
"I am not acquainted with any one of the name of Jasper. Had I been a boy, I should, I suppose, have been called Edgar."

"But do you not like the name of Jasper?" asked Mr. Petrel.

"Yes ; it gives the idea of brilliancy and polish and hardness. But it is a good name. And what do you think of my other name, Petrel? I hope you approve of that?" continued the girl.

"I should be a most strange person if I did not admire it," replied Mr. Petrel.

"Why?" inquired Margaret. "I like it myself, because it gives me the idea of seas wild with storms and white with foam ; of loneliness and the strife of the elements, and rugged regions of dark rocks, and nests, and their downy occupants stowed away safely in the niches of island solitudes."

"Ah!" cried her grandfather, thoughtfully, "there is something stormy connected with those broods—those Mother Carey's chickens. I declare and believe that every one who takes the name is inoculated with the faculty of being tempestuous."

"I will not have you run down my name," said the girl, smiling. "Storms are fine

things sometimes; they clear the air, and bring fair weather."

"Not always," said Mr. Petrel, gloomily, thinking of Mrs. Petrel the second.

"Ah! here is my aunt," cried Margaret; "she ought to defend the name of Petrel, as she once bore it."

"Why should I," replied Aunt Mary, laughing, "when I got rid of it as soon as I could? But papa, have you embraced your grandchild? Margaret, this is your grand-papa."

"I beg your pardon," said Margaret, blushing; "you must have thought me very disrespectful. I did not know you had a right to my duty."

"You have a right to my affection, my dear," said Mr. Petrel, kissing her. "I am obliged to your Aunt Mary for the introduction."

Margaret nestled up to his side. "I feel so glad to have found such kind relations," she said.

"You are very like your poor father, Margaret," he said, with some show of tenderness. "Poor fellow! he was so very fond of me," he said, putting his hands to his eyes. "It was a grief to his mother, who doted on him;

but his thoughts were ever with his father. I nursed him during that frightful accident. The surgeons were fearful lest my emotions should overpower my discretion; but I restrained grief and alarm for his sake, and then he went and married without my consent, but we will not go into that now."

"No, papa; here is Mr. Tyrie and Mr. Franklin, and dinner is on table. Come, Margaret, Mr. Tyrie shall take charge of you, and I will conduct papa."

"What a scrape you got me into, Mary, with that pretty girl; you should have told me. You might have knocked me down with a feather, as the maids say, when I came into the room, so like her poor father."

"We will discuss the matter in the inner drawing-room after dinner," said Mary, who feared that Margaret might catch some of the observations made by the reckless parent.

Mr. Petrel was a brilliant talker and an inveterate punster; his audience were appreciative, and he was pleased at having another listener who laughed in the right place, the other Margaret scarcely ever laughed. It is said that at theatrical representations ordered by royalty in the seclusion of royal residences, it is not etiquette for any of the courtiers to

show either amusement or sympathy. If royalty should applaud, a faint dull application of white kid gloves to each other followed suit; if royalty laughed, the courtiers' stiff gravity of countenance might relax into a smile; if royalty was touched by pathos, an additional shade of gloom fell on the audience. Now in a fainter degree Margaret, the aunt, was a courtier to the two sisters—her step-aunt and her formidable step-mother—she always awaited her cue from one of the two ladies. Such tardy approbation comes too late for the railroad pace of a punster or a joker of jokes, and Mr. Petrel enjoyed the unrestrained and prompt amusement shown in the intelligent face of his grandchild. Margaret, the daughter, too, was always mixed up with his wife, which was like a sweet dish with an ugly flavour. Altogether Mr. Petrel exceedingly approved of his newly-found relative.

He wished to know more about the wretched woman, his daughter-in-law, and when the gentlemen came up and Margaret was set down to the piano to sing duets with Mr. Robert Franklin, and Mr. Tyrie took possession of his own easiest chair, Mr. Petrel took Mary aside to the farthest end of the second drawing-room, and began his inquiries with—

"How about this woman, Margaret's mother? An old painted creature—drinks, most probably."

"I think not."

"Ah, my dear, you do not know how common a habit it is with that kind of woman. I really think it is a merciful instinct given them to shorten their lives, and rid the world of unclean lumber."

"My dear papa, do not rush to conclusions. In the first place, excepting that Mrs. Edgar Petrel is fair and small, she looks not a day older than I do. She must have been a child when poor Edgar married her. She is particularly quiet, lady-like, and unobtrusive in manner. I saw but little of her, but my boy considers her little less than angelic, from her gentle teaching and general kindness to him. I was rather ashamed of not having called on her before I left."

"But, my dear Mary, she was convicted of theft. It would be impossible to notice a woman who had undergone her punishment in the county gaol. Think of the spoons."

"My dear papa, I have found wealth do wonders. It has converted a tyrannical step-mother into a subservient one. I have reason to respect the god Plutus. If poor Mrs.

Edgar Petrel had been rich Mrs. Edgar Petrel, no one would have dared to apply that ugly one-syllable word theft to her little transgression. It would have had all the dignity of four syllables—Kleptomania. The question is not now to be whether we visit the mother, but the daughter. Poor little Mrs. Edgar is content, seemingly, to live like a mouse in a hole under the floor, and let her daughter come out to frisk about for a short time in the sunshine. I will parody Gisbourne, and say—

‘Let her enjoy her little day,
Her lowly bliss receive ;
Oh ! do not lightly take away
The joy thou canst not give.’”

“All very pretty and sentimental, my dear. I only hope you will find those starched old cats at Abbotsland as soft-hearted as you are. I doubt it.”

“You know, papa,” said Mary, coaxingly, “if you choose to take her up, no one can dare to gainsay it.”

“I am not sure of that,” grunted papa ; “and she is so very much handsomer and more intelligent than her namesake—their special favourite.”

“I am sure I don’t think Mrs. Seaward will invite her to the grand doings at Abbots-

land. My dear papa, cannot you make one effort for her through Mr. Seaward?"

Mr. Petrel laughed scoffingly.

"What can two men do against two women? I should like to know if Tyrie could get an invitation for a young lady to this house, if he were eager for it."

Mary laughed, and said she should like to see him try.

"We must go back," said the grandfather. "That girl sings like twenty nightingales in one. Listen to 'Comfort ye my people.' And now she begins—'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good tidings.' I wonder how they managed to get her so well taught."

"Oh, Mrs. Edgar Petrel and Margaret lived with a highly educated lady, a Mrs. Heathdale, who doted on the child! Judging by the corrections of little Edgar's letters, Margaret's mother must be well informed. He always wrote to me in the evenings when he was at their house. I can answer for her handwriting, which is copperplate in its perfection, only a little too formal."

"Ah! yes, I see. Just as a man who has taken too much wine walks with extra precision, to prove himself to be perfectly sober."

"You are too bad, papa. But put in a

word for the poor girl, if you can. I'm sure 'she is a credit to her bringing-up,' as the nurse says in the burlesque of 'Romeo and Juliet.'"

Margaret was down to preside at her grandfather's breakfast next day, as he had an early engagement at the bench of magistrates. He was pleased by her perfect repose of manner, and by the absence of consciousness. She was not flurried in helping the coffee; and, having learnt from her aunt Mr. Petrel's preference for hot buttered toast and eggs, she took care that they were ready.

CHAPTER X.

“And none can tell, so gay thou art,
That thou and I are far apart.”

MARGARET wrote daily to her mother—open-hearted letters, careless as happy youth will be careless, of the life that was passing, “hushed in patient wretchedness at home.”

“I have seen grandpapa,” she wrote; “he is a fine-looking old man, white-haired and bald, with a magnificent extent of chest and white shirt-front, a fresh colour, and a droll twinkle in his blue eyes. He seemed very fond of me all at once. It seemed, as I longed to tell him, like the sudden springing up of verdure in the dawn of an arctic summer, when cold had frozen everything for previous months. I thought he would say I was as ungrateful as the Greek mentioned by Epic-tetus, who, when he was congratulated on the arrival of the long desired rain, remarked—

‘Yes, but it has been a long time coming.’ I thought he might have asked me to go to his house ; but probably he was fearful of offending his wife.”

Here Margaret pondered. She had been about to ask what her grandfather had meant by his reference to her father’s marriage being a stolen one; but a sudden fear of giving pain—some mysterious pain, the cause of which she was ignorant—stopped her. She would ask her mother when she returned home, if anything led to the subject.

The rest of the letter was filled with anticipations of the coming ball, which Pleasance read at her solitary breakfast, where, as it was considered still too early in the season to have a fire, her tea was made with water which did not boil ; and of Louisa’s laches Pleasance was too indifferent to complain. At dinner her potatoes were either water-logged, or not warmed through. Pleasance left them untasted, and ate bread. One day she suggested that she thought Louisa ought to do better ; but the girl replied that she did as well as she could.

Pleasance wrote daily to her child. The record of the eventless tenor of her daily life came like the sighing of a long, distant gale

to one shut in a warm, well-lighted, heavily-curtained room, where there were music, laughter, and gay companions. The murmurs of the mournful wind are forgotten as soon as heard, in the confusion of cheerful voices and merry laughter. Pleasance would not have wished it otherwise. She would not sully her girl's happiness by a breath of sorrow. She herself grew thinner and sadder every day. She felt overhung by a brooding misfortune, which would crush Margaret. Of herself she did not think, save as in her relation to her child. She had been loved and treasured and valued once; now she was useless—a weed torn from the rock, on ocean's foam to sail. If she could die before her early transgression was discovered, it might not affect that darling child's prospects. "Surely," she thought, weeping, "she is so clever, so beautiful, so attractive, well educated, and good, that she has qualities which, by their splendour, would efface any pale and squalid figure standing, like myself, in the background." Poor mother! to the eyes of malevolence the brilliancy of one figure would call more envious inquiry as to the unharmonious accompaniment.

The night of the ball arrived. Mrs. Tyrie had said to Robert Franklin, "You will not

fail to join us at the door ;" and when the shawls and cloaks were thrown off by the ladies, they found the two gentlemen dutifully awaiting them on the threshold of the ball-room.

Margaret silently took her uncle's arm, and Mr. Franklin offering his to Mrs. Tyrie, led her to the top of the room. The ball-room was brilliantly lighted, and was already crowded with people. The music, the glare, and the succession of strangers passing by Margaret, bewildered her brain. She had a dim perception that she was come there to see Cassilis ; but she felt so incapable of hearing anything that her uncle said, or distinguishing one person from another, that she longed to get into some quiet, dim room, where she might recover sight, hearing, and perception. Luckily, her uncle was accustomed to crowds at his wife's receptions ; and moreover, his brain was not bewildered by the thought of an absent Cassilis. He steered his niece straight after the white feather tipped with blue, which adorned the stately head of Aunt Mary, who was considered a fine woman, being tall and plump. Mr. Tyrie meant to deposit Margaret by the side of his wife, and see if the card-room was comfortably warm, and fit for a rubber at whist.

"There is room for you, Margaret," said her aunt, drawing closer the rich folds of blue satin of which her dress was composed.

Mr. Franklin was standing by, buttoning his white kid glove.

"Miss Petrel," he said, kindly, "might I have the honour of dancing with you? They are forming the sets now for the 'Lancers,' and if we do not go at once the places will be filled."

Margaret had hoped that Cassilis would find her out at once, and dance with her as soon as she appeared in the room, but she perceived the difficulty of seeing any one, and the impossibility of being seen if she sat down by her aunt, with a dozen ladies in multitudinous folds of silks and satins standing in front of her, so, giving her bouquet to her aunt, she walked with Mr. Franklin to find a vacant place in a set. She was grateful to her partner for having asked her. She began to realize that she, being utterly amongst strangers, might, but for him, have been left packed up in purple and fine linen for a great part of the evening.

Margaret was dressed in white. She had possessed no ornament till ten minutes before she came to the ball, when she had entered the drawing room dressed to await her aunt's coming.

Mr. Tyrie arose from his arm chair as she approached him.

"Stand off that I may look at you," he said. "Books tell you, my dear, that beauty is, when unadorned, adorned the most. Do you think so?"

"I don't know, uncle, about that. I am certain that I shall have, if it be true, a pre-eminence of adorning, as I have not an ornament to wear, not even a flower."

"It would be a pity you should grow vain, fancying you can do without what other girls prize," and he drew a case from the back of the chair, where he had concealed it, and took from it a gold chain with a locket, consisting of a fine opal, surrounded with circles of pearls.

The effect was beautiful, and Margaret's eyes sparkled with delighted gratitude as her uncle fastened the snap round her neck. Her pleasure was so evident that her uncle felt quite repaid for rather a costly expenditure.

Mrs. Tyrie laughed good naturedly when she saw the ornament, and, tapping her husband's bald forehead with her fan, reminded him that her birthday would soon come. She was pleased at the compliment to her niece paid by her husband. The bouquet she had ordered herself.

CHAPTER XI.

“Farewell, false friend ! Our scenes of kindness close ;
To friendly words and sunny smiles—farewell.”

WHEN Mr. Franklin had reached the bottom of the room, he saw two couples standing top and bottom, but a deficiency at the sides. A gentleman, who stood at the top, with a distinguished looking lady at his right hand, addressed Mr. Franklin, asking him to take one of the sides, in the hope that chance might send some couple to make up the eight persons necessary for the “Lancers.” As Mr. Franklin and this gentleman were both tall, they looked over the heads of the intervening people towards the door, in the hope of recognizing some one whom they knew. At the same moment they left their partners, and pushed their way towards the door, but Mr. Franklin returned immediately, saying he has

found some one. Then Margaret saw Cassilis Forrester leading forward a young lady so like herself that she might have been her twin sister. Their height seemed the same at first sight, though, on keener observation, it was seen that the hair of one lady was dressed high on the top of the head, whilst that of the other resembled the simple arrangement of the hair seen on the Canova Venus. Margaret, the last arrived, wore a single diamond as a pendant to a gold chain. The difference in the ornaments gave these young ladies, for that night, the names of the opal and the diamond. They stood opposite each other for a second when the music began. There was Cassilis, of whom Margaret had dreamed by night, and thought by day, standing before her, without even the most distant recognition ; she saw he had turned a ghastly colour, and she felt her heart beating so fast that she feared she should fall ; but pride kept her from any unseemly exhibition of emotion, and when the turn of the side couples came, she danced with her partner between the flanking couple opposite with seeming indifference, though she nearly touched Cassilis in the transit. Then she had to set to the tall man, and be turned by him to her

place, who observed her with glances of admiration. Opposite to her by the side of Cassilis was her double. She saw the likeness, and was angry, for she preferred her own face; anger was also the feeling of her relative and rival. In this the girl with the opal had the most reason for displeasure. There was not much difference, but the advantage would be in the opinion of most people on her side. There were men, however, to whom the seeming timidity of the Abbotsland guest would be a greater attraction than the dignity and independence of Margaret of the opal.

When their turn of dancing was done, and the top and bottom couple had begun the second figure, Margaret saw a forced smile on the lips of Cassilis, as he looked past her to some one behind her. A strange feeling of intuitive politeness prevented the impulse to turn her head, and learn the object of Mr. Forrester's smile. "I shall see, presently," she thought. "The folks are too densely packed to move far;" and when in the following movement she took the opposite place, she saw her grandfather standing between two ladies, fixed as tightly to him as wings to a house. One was thin and stern, dressed in

pink silk, for, never having had the trouble of maternity, Mrs. Petrel had never dated herself as being too old to wear gay colours. It is the sight of our children's dimples that snatch them from our own cheeks : they are terrible reminders of the lapse of time. On the other arm of Mr. Petrel was Mrs. Seaward, who was looking at Cassilis, and the girl she intended for his wife.

The countenances of both ladies were portentous of storms. Who was this creature so fearfully and wonderfully like their Margaret? What did she there dancing in the very same quadrille with Cassilis and their darling ?

This assured girl had smiled sweetly at Mr. Petrel: their Mr. Petrel—their property. They looked up at the receiver of that intelligent look, and detected the sudden recomposing of his face after its relaxation.

Margaret did not look at Cassilis again. "The gentleman is in leading strings," she said. "I will not be the occasion of them being tightened, and the poor child being suddenly checked in his career."

In the penultimate figure, each lady had to advance in rotation to curtsey. This made her an instantaneous object of attention, and the

wearer of the opal claimed approbation by the superior grace of her genuflection.

In the right and left all round, Cassilis detained her hand an instant ; at least, she thought so, for it was so slight that she admitted a doubt. In the next round Margaret did not give her hand : she was indignant at conduct, which she considered so contemptible.

The dance was over, and Mr. Franklin offered his arm to his partner. The couples, removed from their proper position, only seemed to increase the crush. Suddenly they were arrested just before Mr. Petrel. Margaret saw no reason why she should not address him.

“Grandpapa!” she cried. “I am so glad you are here to-night : I know so few people in this great crowd of strangers. Is this my step-grandmamma?” she asked, with a charming appearance of simplicity ; looking at the plump lady, who, bowing stiffly, said, “I have not that honour.”

Mrs. Petrel flushed with vexation.

There is scarcely a woman who does not shudder a little at that word, “grandmamma.” It seems to put her on ten years in life. Mrs. Petrel felt this and fumed. For very shame’

sake, Mr. Petrel felt that he must own his son's daughter.

"Jane," he said, turning to his wife, "this is my granddaughter."

Mrs. Petrel bowed the stiffest of bows.

"Mr. Franklin, do you think you can take me to my aunt?" she said, sadly.

She looked at her namesake, and at Cassilis, who now came up to join Mrs. Seaward; but she saw no introduction was to be expected to her young aunt. A sense of injury and injustice oppressed her, but, if her heart ached, she only drew herself up with added dignity, and her cheek flushed more angrily, and her eyes flashed more brilliant fire.

Before she slept that night, she was determined to demand from her aunt an explanation of her grandfather's years of silence, and tardy kindness, and of the chilliness of the ladies who were with him. She was as nearly related to her Aunt Margaret as to her Aunt Mary. She felt the natural longing for communication and companionship with a girl of her own age, and considered herself not slighted only, but insulted by its being withheld.

Mr. Franklin took her back to the seat at the upper end of the room, where her Aunt Mary had placed herself, and who was in full

conclave with two other matrons, discussing the difficulty of getting good cooks.

"There must be something in the occupation," said Aunt Mary. "I have heard that blacksmiths suffer from the same failing: it is the thirst and exhaustion produced by heat which calls for the use of stimulants."

Margaret was deposited on the end of the bench which supported the full forms of the married ladies. Mr. Franklin went to look for another partner. "I suppose," said the girl, bitterly to herself, "he thinks he has done his duty, and will not ask me again. Oh, dear! I do wonder where Mr. Knight can be? He would ask me, probably, if he could find me out; but I think a ball is a very dreary thing when one does not know the people." She longed to get up and go to some other part of the room; not that she would be better off anywhere else, but being unhappy, made her restless. Presently the couples began whirling round to the tender tones of "Ever of thee." No chance of moving now. She would have been knocked down had she attempted it. She must still writhe under her wounded feelings, and listen to the laches of cooks by the side of the matrons. Presently a tall gentleman hastened to her side, offering his arm.

"Will you not come? We are late."

Margaret half rose and sat down again, murmuring, "Some mistake."

"No mistake," said he; "you are Miss Petrel—I am Lord Lorimer. This is such a charming waltz."

Off they went. Margaret remembered that she had wondered if any one could willingly waltz twice. She was twirled round and round by her partner, and in her gyrations she had a vision of her grandpapa's face, bearing on it a ludicrous expression of perplexity, of two angry middle-aged ladies, and of disappointment in the tearful eyes of her namesake. The glimpse was but for an instant, and it was lost in a turmoil of gauzes and satins, and flying ribbons and dancing ringlets. At the bottom of the room Margaret stopped breathless.

"Will you like to come for air and coolness into the card-room?" asked Lord Lorimer. "It is forbidden, but the waiter will admit me." Without waiting for an answer, he drew Margaret towards the door, and giving an order to a man standing there, the servant took a key from his pocket, and unlocked a side door leading into the card-room.

There Margaret saw her uncle with anxious

attention holding his cards close to his shirt-front, and regarding his partner as if existence depended on the next card thrown down.

"We have no business here, and none but whist-players have the privilege of the entrée at the other door. I know all about it, for I am fond of a game myself sometimes. We must speak very low, or we shall disturb their calculations."

"And be turned out like intruders on mysteries of the black art. However," said the girl, "my uncle is one of the wizards playing with 'the devil's books,' as my dear old servant calls cards, and he is very good-natured."

"He looks so," said Lord Lorimer.

"Yes; he gave me this beautiful locket," continued Margaret, pointing to it. "He put it round my throat before I left his drawing-room. I was so glad to have it, because it is the only ornament I have."

"It is fortunate that your appearance does not require ornaments," said the peer, politely. "Do you know that charming old song—

'Deck not with gems that lovely form for me,
They in my eyes can add no charm to thee;
Braid not for me the tresses of thy hair,
I must have loved thee hadst thou not been fair.'

"Yes, I know it," and she went on with the following line—

" 'How oft when half in tears hast thou beguiled—' "

"Oh! do you know the third verse?" asked the peer; "I never caught it. I wish you would repeat it whilst I write it down." He took his engagement card and began to write, Margaret looking over to see if he had put down the words correctly. Suddenly she said—

"I have seen your handwriting before; you are Lord Lorimer. I did not catch the name you gave."

"Where could you have seen my writing? I am much honoured by your remembering it wherever you may have fallen in with it."

"I do not think that I should have remembered it so well, only that the gentleman with whom I was travelling asked me to decide on the characters of the writers whose letters he held out for my inspection."

"You make me quite nervous, Miss Petrel. Pray tell me your judgment of mine."

"Indeed I would not for the world be so absurdly conceited."

"Pray, are you only absurdly conceited when you travel with a gentleman?"

"You make me ashamed of myself. I wish I had said nothing about it," replied Margaret.

"Then you will not tell me my character from my handwriting, though you told it to the gentleman?"

"I will not talk to you any more. I will claim my uncle's protection," said Margaret, smiling.

"If you break this spell and reveal yourself, depend upon it there will be sudden darkness, muttering voices, and a general smash."

Margaret sat down again.

"May I ask how you are related to that gentleman whom you claim as your uncle? I fancied his name was Tyrie, not Petrel."

"You are right; Mr. Tyrie married my father's sister."

"You puzzle me more and more. That handsome-looking man is your father, is he not? Fresh-coloured and rather bald."

"No; he is my grandfather."

"But are you not Miss Margaret Petrel to whom I was introduced by Mrs. Seaward?"

"I am *Miss* Petrel—my name is Margaret—I do not know Mrs. Seaward personally. I told you you had mistaken me for some one else."

"It is really very dreadful that I should

have been dancing with you under false pretences. What can I do? Must I take you back to your namesake, and say I am very sorry?"

"You may say so, and tell the truth."

"I always tell the truth, and I should be compelled to confess that I am very glad? But will you tell me all the relationship? Nothing makes a man so awkward as making mistakes on such points," said Lord Lorimer.

"Ah! No doubt you feel that now you have paid the penalty. About my relations, I must say that if they seem 'more than kin, they are certainly less than kind.'"

"With the exception," said Lord Lorimer, "I suppose of the giver of that handsome opal locket?"

"Yes. My uncle and aunt are very kind. I do not know why the others are not."

"Pray begin like the old romances and novels. I want to know all the intricacies of these relationships."

"Agreed: there is Mr. Petrel, rector of Birchland; he had a son called Edgar, who was my father, who was wrecked in a boat, trying to save the last of a crew, of which he and his friend and lieutenant had succeeded

in saving the greatest number. Mr. Petrel, of Birchland, was the father also of a lady called Mary, who married that dear uncle sitting there so unconscious. Aunt Mary came to the port where we live."

"Pardon me for interrupting. "Where who live? Who are the we?"

"It used to be the mother of the lieutenant, my mother, and myself, but Mrs. Heathdale, the mother, is dead," said Margaret, sadly.

"Were you fond of her?"

"Of course I was: she was so good and kind."

"Well! 'Aunt Mary came.' Go on," said Lord Lorimer.

"She brought a boy—a son of hers—to be instructed, that he might pass his examination for the navy. She found me out, and has been very kind ever since. She introduced me to grandpapa. He was very nice when he was at my uncle's house, but this evening he seemed afraid to speak to me."

"But now I do not understand. Is that young lady a twin sister of yours?"

"No. My Aunt Mary says that she resembles my father very much; she is my grandfather's youngest child, and his second

wife is very fond of her, and has made her entirely her charge."

"Then she is your aunt."

"Yes. She is only about twelve months older than I am."

Lord Lorimer smiled.

"Then you have been shut up like the man in the iron mask all your life till now. What a disturbance the twin brother of Louis XIV. would have made had he suddenly appeared to a court ball!"

"Now, if you are satisfied," said Margaret, "you shall take me back to Mrs. Tyrie, and you can then make your peace with Mrs. Petrel, and with her stepdaughter."

"I had rather have the end of my dance with you first. That hurry and augmentation of sound means that, 'Ever of thee' has reached its final chords; and there will be a quadrille next."

"But we were not engaged for this dance?"

"Never mind: we are engaged. I will ask your aunt for the next;" and as he spoke he rose, and conducted her to the drawing-room, where the couples were forming a quadrille.

CHAPTER XII.

"Graceful heads with their ringlets bright,
Which danced in the breeze in a play of light."

"THERE is your aunt," said Lord Lorimer.
"Shall we ask her and her partner to be our
vis-à-vis?"

"Margaret of the opal smiled, and extended her hand frankly to Jack Knight, who had Margaret of the diamond on his arm. That young lady contentedly took her place opposite her niece, and engaged herself to Lord Lorimer for the next galop.

Once holding Margaret's hand in the pastorage, Jack said in a low voice, which, however reached the ears of Lord Lorimer, "Have you continued your speculations on handwriting since I showed you those specimens?"

"No," smiled Margaret: "I have had no opportunity;" and Lord Lorimer made a note

in his memory to find out from Jack Knight what Margaret had said of his handwriting.

Where were the two sisters, guardians of their Margaret? They were seated together, with Mr. Petrel between them, who had made several desperate attempts to escape to the whist-room. Cassilis had been hunting for Margaret, whom he still loved, though he had been too cowardly to recognise her in the presence of his mother and aunt. He had seen her going round within the arm of Lord Lorimer, when they had both disappeared. The room was so crowded that when Cassilis was in one part of it, he felt how probable it was they would be in the opposite corner. The desire to find Margaret increased with the futility of the search. His mouth began to be parched; he felt a nervous dread lest his mother should seize him, and nail him down by her side, so that he could not continue his search. Margaret's value was boundless in his eyes, now that he had seen her appropriated by another. The card-room—"they must be there," he said, a bright thought striking him. He went to the door: a waiter stood before it.

"None but whist players admitted," said he. "The gentlemen won't have the dancing

ladies and gentlemen making their room a place to rest themselves in, sir."

This gave Cassilis the idea that Margaret and her partner could not be there. The stepdaughter of Mrs. Petrel, poor girl, being disappointed of her partner, had to sit down between the guardian sisters, and make the best of what amusement she could obtain from watching the dancers. They had seen Lord Lorimer sweep by with Margaret within his arms, and believed that Margaret had been guilty of malice prepense in taking the partner who was engaged to Margaret the aunt.

That young lady, however, had been consoled, when Jack Knight, who had come late to the ball, having dined at the hotel opposite to the ball-room, had engaged her to take part in the quadrille, and became quite cheerful and forgiving, when Lord Lorimer, begging her pardon for his unintentional mistake, engaged her for the next galop.

When Lord Lorimer conducted Margaret to Mrs. Tyrie after the conclusion of the quadrille, he begged her to keep herself disengaged for the supper dance.

Margaret assented willingly, being ignorant that to dance thrice in one evening with the same gentleman was likely to excite unplea-

sant observations. She had scarcely seated herself, and told her aunt that she thought her uncle was winning from the satisfaction in his face, when she saw Cassilis coming up to her, and she looked another way. He shook hands with Mrs. Tyrie, and she said—

“You do not know my niece, Miss Petrel, though you know a Miss Petrel who so much resembles her. Margaret, allow me to introduce to you Mr. Cassilis Forrester, a connection of ours, and a very good friend of mine.”

“May I have the pleasure of dancing with you the next waltz?”

“I am tired, I thank you,” said Margaret, curtly.

“My dear child, you cannot be tired yet. I never knew such nonsense.”

“Pray allow me the justice of hearing an explanation,” said the youth, in a low voice, under the cover of a fresh burst from the orchestra.

Margaret’s heart melted at the voice of her recreant lover, and she arose and took his arm.

“Are you not afraid of being seen by your mother or your aunt?” she asked, scoffingly.

“I wish you would not make such bitter speeches. You do not know how difficult some things are to do.”

"Yes, I can appreciate the difficulty. I have just seen a fine young gentleman reduced to a position utterly contemptible by his cowardice."

Cassilis made a gesture of impatience with his arm and head.

"Let us go away and talk somewhere," he said.

Margaret thought he wished to get out of the observation of his relatives, and obstinately declined to go.

"Then we will sit here, if you please, and take the chance of being overheard."

When they were seated, Cassilis seemed puzzled how to begin.

"Well, Mr. Forrester, will you tell me why you recognized me at last—if you cannot tell me why you did not know me at first?"

"I could not be in the room and see you dancing with other people and not caring for me, without one effort to alter the state of affairs," said the young man, honestly.

There was a pause, for a lady and gentleman stood silently for a moment before them; whose backs were turned to Margaret and Cassilis. They were so near that the stiff panier of gauze carried by the lady obscured the face of Cassilis, whilst the flaps of the gentleman's

coat-tails suffocated Margaret by their proximity—an unsentimental interruption to an explanation.

“Margaret, do come to the refreshment-room.”

“No, Mr. Forrester; I prefer to remain in any room which holds your mother and aunt.”

She rose, and he walked by her side.

“It is utterly impossible to explain here. May I call on you to-morrow?”

“If your mamma gives you permission.”

“Gabrielle!” he said, tenderly; and all Margaret’s love brimmed in her eyes and trembled on her lip, “do you remember the assertion of the third student in ‘The Landlady’s Daughter,’ which I sang to you on that delightful evening in the twilight?”

Margaret bowed.

“Will you take one turn with me in the waltz before I take you to Mrs. Tyrie?”

Margaret assented; and presently Mrs. Seaward and Mrs. Petrel saw what grieved their eyes and vexed their hearts—the obnoxious Margaret dancing with their boy. Worse followed, for a few minutes later Lord Lorimer passed them, conducting Margaret to the quadrille which preceded the supper. They

had counted on this nobleman to intensify the interest of Cassilis in *their* Margaret, by exciting his jealousy, being women enough to know that nothing was deemed a prize that several hands did not essay to clutch; and here was the very man on whom they had reckoned dancing three times during one evening with the other Margaret.

"And I must say," cried Mrs. Seaward, with a sigh, "she is by far the finer girl of the two."

"I cannot see it, Clarinda. There is a decision in that girl's walk which proves her to be low-born. There is something too upright in her person—too arrogant in her gait."

"Lord Lorimer does not seem to agree with you, Jane," replied the mother of Cassilis.

"Ah! he is a man of very peculiar temperament and feeling. He is wealthy, and is determined to act on his own judgment, and that of no one else. He is very independent and self-sufficient. Moreover, he is unpleasantly sarcastic on people who tread the beaten tracts of life."

"Lorimer are you talking about?" asked Mr. Petrel, coming back from the refreshment-room, where he had obtained some coffee to keep him awake till the next rubber, when he

had a chance of cutting in. "Queer fellow, Lorimer! Heard a story of him the other day. Lorimer was an orphan early. He was a very small boy when his guardian sent him to Westminster. In his dormitory there was a big bully, who made little Lorimer the especial butt of his persecutions. The boy next in size to the bully was the son of a cheesemonger, and was called 'Stilton' by the boys. He was a vulgar fellow, and misplaced his r's and h's when he first went there, but very good-natured. He took little Lorimer under his especial protection, and fought several battles, being stout-built and punchy, before he established his supremacy over the bully—by which act little Lorimer was emancipated from slavery. Years went on, and 'Stilton' left Westminster, and the place knew him no more. Lorimer was self-supporting by that time, and in due course was removed from Westminster to Cambridge. He went out without reading for honours, but was high amongst the pols. Some years after he went with his affianced bride into a furniture depôt, where the young lady was about to choose carpets for their future residence.

"There was a stout, heavy-looking man serv-

ing in the shop, with the usual servile civility, rolling and unrolling different patterns of Brussels, Kidderminster, and Turkey carpets. Lord Lorimer had been detained for a moment at the door speaking to a friend, and on entering the warehouse he saw his beloved pointing with the ivory tip of her parasol to a pattern of white water-lilies on their circular leaves. It was just a pattern, with its cool purity, for a small south drawing-room. 'Come and look at this carpet, Lorimer,' said the lady. Lorimer placed himself beside her, to observe the effect of the pattern held out at arm's length by a fat little punchy fellow. Lord Lorimer looked from the carpet to the salesman. 'Stilton, by Jove!' he cried; and seizing the hand of his *ci-devant* friend, he shook it as only a hearty Englishman can greet those he loves.

" 'I declare I have seen no one I so much care about since I last saw you turning out of the cloisters from Dean's Yard. I stuffed my knuckles into my eyes that the fellows might not see I was crying, and when I was detected, I swore that there was a fly in my eye. Stilton, this lady is to be my wife, and she will be as fond of you as I am.'

"Poor Stilton was no longer the unembarrassed lad who had received so many facers

in behalf of his small protégé Lorimer. He flushed all over his face and ears, and releasing his hand as soon as he could do it without disrespect, he muttered something about high honour, gratitude for his lordship's notice, etc.

"Come and dine with me, only my affianced wife, Miss Duff, and Lady Inchbrooke, her mother."

"Gracious powers!" cried both the ladies; "he never could have insulted his future mother-in-law and his lady-love!"

"Indeed he did," said Mr. Petrel. "Stilton excused himself: he could not leave the shop on any day but Sunday.

"Never mind, old man; you shall come after morning service and spend the day with me, and we will take a drive in the park after luncheon, or go to the Zoo; then Eliza and her mother will dine with us, and give us a little music in the evening.

"That's a bargain," cried the peer, seizing the hand of Stilton again in his; and then turning to the astounded lady, he asked how many carpets she wanted, and not understanding her mumbled answer, he declared he should often drop in, and would tell his friend the quantities when the room and staircases were measured."

"But Lord Lorimer is not married!" exclaimed Mrs. Seaward.

"Of course not, after that," continued Mr. Petrel. "Indeed, I have heard it said that he did it on purpose to get rid of the engagement."

"Do you imagine that was his motive?"

"No; I really think he is so very peculiar in his ideas about social distinctions, that he considered it a duty he owed to gratitude and to Stilton to ask him to dinner. You may imagine how the pair looked driving in Hyde Park, the spruce City beau appearing so intensely happy in his proximity to a peer. The blissful carelessness of his lordship to the covert smiles and sneers of his acquaintances. He bore it all for Sally—Stilton, I mean; and in truth, I do not blame him. When the two aggrieved ladies, mother and daughter, declared they would never consent to the marriage unless he promised never to admit Stilton again, he said that so long as he possessed any self-respect he did not mean to be ungrateful, and Stilton should come to his house whenever he chose to ask him."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Seaward, "that comes of sending boys to Westminster."

"Westminster blackguards, you know. I

was too wise to send Cassilis anywhere but to Harrow. Harrow gentlemen!" she repeated, smoothing her rich satin dress, as if the polish of the material was emblematic, in her mind, of the polish to be obtained from so gentleman-like a school.

"Where is that young gentleman, by the bye?" asked Mr. Petrel, whose small, keen, blue eyes seemed to dart their glances into the remotest corners of rooms, and take in all that intervened in their passage.

A sudden qualm came over the ladies, but Mrs. Petrel consoled her sister by the assurance that she had seen him three minutes previously with Margaret on his arm. Margaret at that moment came up on the arm of Jack Knight, and deposited herself by the side of her father.

"Where is Cassilis?" said Jane.

"What have you done with my son?" cried Clarinda.

"I have not seen Cassilis," replied the girl, composedly, "since we danced together."

"I saw him," observed Jack Knight, "seemingly engaged in a game of bo-peep, all by himself. He was pushing by one lady and reaching over the shoulders of some tall man, and making himself so objectionable by run-

ning in and out like a dog at a fair, that I got out of his way—would not own to knowing him, in fact.” Jack was determined to be mischievous, so he went on, seeing the ladies looked uneasy. “Do not let your maternal feelings prey upon you, Mrs. Seaward; I never saw any man so fond of home ties, so devoted to his relations. I believe he is at this very moment seated between Miss Petrel and her aunt, Mrs. Tyrie.”

A monkey who set fire to a squib was not more ludicrously alarmed than Jack Knight when he found what a clatter of tongues and flashing of eyes he had created. Both ladies spoke at once, and so fast, as to be unintelligible, till Jack at length understood an order to go to Cassilis at once and tell him to come and join his own party.

He looked with pleading eyes at Mr. Petrel. “I am some years younger than Forrester,” said he; “I really fear I shall not have much effect. But there is supper—he will surely go to the supper-room.”

“Yes, and take Mary or that girl.”

“Go at once, Mr. Knight,” cried Mrs. Petrel, “and desire him to return to his mother.”

Jack got up willingly, and went towards where Mrs. Tyrie and Margaret were seated.

Margaret thought he was coming to ask her to dance, and was very glad. He would talk about Cassilis, and that was the next best thing to talking to him.

"Are you not going in to supper?" he said, addressing the ladies.

"We have been in the supper-room. Lord Lorimer took us in, but the crowd was so great that we came away as soon as we had eaten some jelly, and Lord Lorimer is gone back to get something more substantial for himself." "Where is Cassilis?" said Jack.

"Probably eating lobster salad," replied Aunt Mary. "Are you responsible for his appetite?"

"I suppose," replied Jack, "that accepted hospitality entails its duties as well as its pleasures; and I am my brother's keeper for the present. Miss Petrel, when I have restored that lost sheep of the house of Petrel, who has quite looked the character most sheepishly this evening, will you dance with me? I cannot look like a sheep myself, but I own to a close resemblance to a pug dog;—only see how I will beg:" and he bent his knees, hung his hands like paws before him, and turning his eyes so as to show a rim of white on one side, which increased the re-

semblance ; and both the ladies laughed so heartily, that Jack scarcely knew whether to be vexed at their recognition of the resemblance, or pleased by their tribute to his powers of mimicry.

Here Mr. Franklin came up to entreat for another dance. He looked flushed and wearied, having been kept playing whist with his senior partner. Very few partners have a cordial liking for each other : the chains that unite them are so short, that they are compelled to scrutinize each other's little defects, or to shut their eyes so close that the effort is painful. Poor Mr. Franklin had hoped for so much pleasure from this ball, and the night was more than half over, and he had had but one dance with Miss Petrel. He had found out, by that mysterious instinct which makes folks perceive feelings with regard to themselves, which would never be patent to those less interested, that Mrs. Tyrie meant him to marry her niece. When this first dawned upon him, before Margaret's advent, he had rebelled in his mind. No, sooner would he dissolve partnership at a loss than consent to be united, at the pleasure of his senior's wife, with an awkward, vulgar country girl. He was an excellent musician, and possessed a

beautiful voice. When he heard his own mingled with the cultured utterances of Margaret, he felt that if she had not a penny for her fortune, he should consider himself most favoured could he obtain her for his wife. Her manner to him had the polish of good breeding and the gentleness of indifference, but with that he was satisfied: he could not expect more at present. When he came up and entreated for another dance, Margaret gave him the next after that she was about to dance with Mr. Knight. Mrs. Tyrie pointed out that the other Miss Petrel was sitting down, and would probably like to dance; but he felt in his own mind that it would be but second best, and said he was going to eat some supper, if anything were left fit for human consumption.

He had his dance with Margaret after she had fulfilled her engagement with Jack Knight. She learnt but little about Cassilis, excepting that he seemed very cross and discontented; very busy, too, from having all the arrangements for the party at Abbotsland under his management. Margaret was disappointed, and felt the fatigue of the dancing consequently. It is wonderful how lightness of heart produces lightness of step.

She was returning to her aunt to express her readiness to go home, when Lord Lorimer came up and begged for the crowning waltz. Margaret consented, for she saw malevolent eyes gleaming at her from under bent brows, and she was determined to show that some one, at any rate, showed an appreciation of her dancing.

Cassilis was desired by Mr. Seaward to stand up with their Margaret; and the two young ladies were thus shown very evidently in the thinning company; and their extraordinary likeness was commented on with many wonderings. Cassilis, as he swept round with his step-cousin, heard Lord Lorimer saying that this was the most delightful dance of the evening; and Margaret assented. That night Margaret went back to the house of her aunt with her bosom swelling with a sense of injury.

Margaret was determined to have an explanation with her aunt, and try to find out what was the cause of the covert—nay, the open—insults offered her by her father's family. She did not like to speak before her uncle, and waited till, having had her dress taken off by Sally, who was very sleepy, being unaccustomed to late hours, she threw on a

dressing-gown, and proceeded to her aunt's room, who, similarly released from the bondage of a tight dress, was enjoying a cup of coffee in peace.

"Come in, my dear! I was just about to send you this cup," pointing to one poured out, "by Mansell."

"Thank you, aunt. Could I speak a few words to you alone?"

"Certainly; but they must be few, because your uncle will be here in a short time. Take your coffee. I hope you have enjoyed yourself," she said, doubtfully, for she saw that a storm had gathered on the beautiful brow of her niece.

"Aunt," Margaret began, as soon as the door closed on Mansell, "what is the meaning of all this?"

"Of what, my dear?" asked Aunt Mary. At fifteen she had had no objection to a row; but she had enjoyed a tranquil, comfortable life since then, and she had begun to hate being disturbed. This had been the cause of her hope that Margaret would decline to accept her invitation. Now she shrank from an explanation with the poor girl, who was so naturally indignant at the way in which she had been treated.

“Aunt Mary, tell me why my step-grandmother did not notice me? why grandpapa did not bring my young namesake, and say, ‘You are relations; may you befriends.’ I should have loved that girl, had they given me a chance.”

Mary turned over the subject in her mind, just as a housewife hunts about in a drawer filled with odds and ends, to find something that would do to meet the necessity of the moment. Her thoughts were jumbled up with a receipt for taking stains out of lace without weakening the delicate fabric, which she intended to try on the following morning, as it had been confided to her by one of the matrons at the ball; also with the expressed wish, through a mutual friend, to exchange visits with her; with all those important little trifles which form the sum of a woman’s life—which are like the froth on the top of a trifle, and into which Margaret’s uncomfortable grievance fell like a plummet of lead, scattering the froth and spoiling the trifle utterly.

“My dear! my dear niece! you have done no harm—only you were born, you see—and you are very like my sister Margaret, only handsomer, and they are jealous—that is all:” and here Aunt Mary gave a long sigh of relief, as if she had settled the matter. Margaret was not satisfied.

"Aunt," she said, "what did grandpapa mean by saying what he did about papa's marriage? Why did he object to the marriage? Who could object to my mother—so good, so beautiful, so pure in thought, so correct in conduct?"

"My dear Margaret, folks have a way of objecting to their sons marrying poor girls, especially when those sons are but boys. It means a great increase to the population, without adequate means of their support. In more homely words, it means the coarse parts of joints for food, served on dirty table-cloths, without dinner napkins; unclean children, and ill brought up, in sordid garments, with sordid minds."

Margaret waited for the conclusion of Aunt Mary's speech, and then replied—

"I know nothing of all this. I never felt privation, though we practise economy. Of one thing I am certain, that neither my mother nor I have ever received a sixpence from any of them, nor ever desire their bounty. I feel it hard not to be allowed to give and receive kindness from Margaret. I am sure you have not told me the real reason of their objection to me."

"My dear, your father married without the knowledge of your grandpapa."

"But grandpapa was very kind in his manner to me here, though he seemed perplexed and troubled, and half inclined to laugh at the ball. I should say that he felt they, the women, were making him ridiculous, and enjoyed the joke against himself."

She was going on, when the heavy step of Mr. Tyrie was heard on the stairs.

"You must go, Margaret," said her aunt, glad to be rid of her; and Margaret retired to her room unsatisfied, and in a turmoil of anger and grief, which turned her first ball, so ardently desired, into a torture-chamber.

The next morning Margaret set herself down to write to her mother. She gave her an account of the ball; and, as in this world, "the heart that is soonest awake to the flowers, is always the first to be touched by the thorns," she told her nothing of her vexations, because she knew how deeply her mother would suffer from their piercings. Yet she could not conceal the air of sadness which deadened the life of all the objects described. It seemed as if it must convey pleasure to the absent mother, that Cassilis Forrester, whom her child loved so tenderly, should have spoken

explicitly of his attachment, and declared that he would call on her on the following day to avow it in form. But Pleasance asked herself why there was so much reticence in the way in which Margaret expressed herself. She said that she had danced with a Lord Lorimer, who mistook her for her aunt, and she thought that the ladies resented that she should have profited by the mistake : they looked so crossly at her.

She told her also of her aunt's wish, that she should marry Mr. Franklin; and that she had danced twice with him, and once with Mr. Knight. She did not dance long with Cassilis: they sat out and talked. She found that she danced most comfortably with Lord Lorimer; he was so tall, and so strong in his guiding through the crowd of dancers. The letter concluded with an outpouring of tenderness towards her mother. She had been wounded, and thought with comfort of the repose of the maternal nest; she should be glad to go back to the small house near the sea. She hesitated whether to wait till Mr. Knight should return, or dare the journey with Sally, who, never having travelled by railway before, was completely bewildered by the screams of the whistle and the rattle of the railway.

Whilst she wrote this, she had a happy dream of being escorted down by her future husband, Cassilis Forrester ; for not even the contemptible exhibition he had made of cowardice and indecision at the ball could convince her of his unworthiness. She told herself that it arose from the excess of filial duty : that a virtue carried to excess sometimes overslipped its boundaries, and wandered into the confines of vice ; that so loyal a son would prove a loyal lover and a loyal husband. If his devotion to her made him overleap the limits of the obedience he owed to his parents, it would be a greater proof of devotion than any she could receive from a man who had been accustomed to defy restraint. Love is such a beautifier : it works on its object as does the photographer on the delicate surface of the collodion. The ugly markings are so softened that they become nearly invisible. The beauties are exaggerated.

There was a fevered look of expectation on the beautiful countenance of Margaret, as the morning went on to luncheon without the promised visit from her lover. She went down to luncheon with her aunt, who liked to linger over it, as folks do who have no occupation which presses on their time when

the meal is concluded. Margaret looked at her with irritable wonder. How much longer would her aunt torment the pinion of that roasted chicken? she speculated.

"My dear Margaret, dismember that bird, and give me the back," she said next.

At the small house Margaret had been waited upon by her mother. Now in the rich mansion of her aunt, she found she was—and very properly—expected not to be ministered unto, but to minister in such small acts of polite usefulness to her aunt. She was engaged in severing the wing, preparatory to her task, when a violent ring at the bell made her start, and drop the knife.

"Who can have come to call thus early, I wonder?" said her aunt.

Margaret was very white, but she said nothing, for she feared that she might be disappointed, and that it was not Cassilis after all. There was a step on the stairs—an opening and shutting of doors, and the servant entering gave the card to Margaret of Mr. Cassilis Forrester.

"Dear me!" cried Aunt Mary, all unconscious. "What a nuisance to be interrupted at luncheon! I hate to be disturbed in picking my bones. All the nice bits of skin about

the back, too. Margaret, dear, go up to him as soon as you have done that, and after you have kept him long enough to allow of my finishing, you may bring him down to luncheon, if he likes to have any."

"Yes, aunt," Margaret answered, and going to work deliberately with her dissection, she gave her aunt the coveted daïnty, and then, with a face from which all colour had departed, she went slowly to the drawing-room, feeling as if her heavy feet would never carry her to the presence of her lover.

He was startled by the appearance she presented, but the tenderness of his manner when he rushed up to ask if she were ill, brought the blood back with more vivid colouring to her cheeks.

"No. There is nothing the matter," she said, disengaging herself, for the hand which had clasped hers, seemed inclined to steal round her waist. "Sit there," she said, pointing to an easy chair opposite to the sofa, on which she placed herself, "and give me some explanation of your conduct to me yesterday."

Cassilis then began with some little formality. He had thought over what he had to say several times. A speech written

gains by this weeding and selection. A speech to be said loses the impression of earnestness and truth which it might make if unstudied.

“ I meant to have told my mother of my attachment to you as soon as I returned to Abbotsland, and to convince her, who had always seemed to consider my happiness as her chief object, that a marriage with you was the only way to promote it ; but when I got home I found her full of anxiety about a stupid party to which she had invited about two hundred and fifty people. It seemed to me, then, that I must please her and get her mind free from anxiety before she would attend to my concerns. I threw myself entirely into the business, for to do such a thing properly, though it is so trivial, is really a task that requires all one’s energies. It is easier to fire a cannon ball than to direct a feather which is tossing on the summer air, you know. As I went on I saw how determined my mother and my aunt were that I should marry my step-cousin, and I better estimated the difficulties of obtaining my mother’s consent. I had resolved, however, to try as soon as the party was over, when the death of my stepfather’s uncle made the fête impossible for the present. I resolved, then, to go abroad,

and get out of the way of further complications with my cousin Margaret, and trust to the future for the fulfilment of my wishes."

"Did it not strike you that you were acting dishonourably, in leaving England without a word written to me to complete what you had begun to express on the evening you left me?"

"I could not remember what I had said, nor how much you would understand from my hurried words. I only knew what I felt then, and what I feel now, that you must be my wife. I shall never love another woman as I love you."

"Then you have spoken to Mrs. Seaward, and obtained her consent?"

"No, not yet. She was too much fatigued last night, and this morning she had not quitted her room when I left Abbotsland."

This seemed to Margaret to be a cowardly evasion.

"You have now fulfilled your promise in calling; but I told you no love talk could be listened to by me without your mother's knowledge. Our interview is ended, therefore. Will you take some luncheon?"

"No," said Cassilis. "Margaret, you are very unkind to me. Will you not engage yourself to be my wife, and let me tell my

mother that such is the case? She will forego her opposition probably if she feels that it is useless."

"I certainly will not do so. Why should she and her sister have treated me with such marked coldness last night? What have I ever done to deserve being put without the pale of common civility? Why am I not allowed communication with my Aunt Margaret, a girl of my own age, whom I should have liked to have known and loved. My grandfather was kind, even to tenderness, in his manner, but even he seemed transformed to stone by the gorgon faces of those two women on each side of him."

Cassilis winced. He loved his mother, and had loved her for twenty-four years. Margaret might call his Aunt Jane a gorgon if she chose, but not that pretty, plump mother of his.

"Margaret," he said, at length, "you could not have been more puzzled at my mother's incivility to you than I was myself. It must arise from some misunderstanding on her part. I will go home and force an explanation on her, and let you know the result."

He got up, and was about to take her hand, when Mrs. Tyrie opened the door.

Cassilis recovered himself with presence of mind, and declared that he had called to inquire after the ladies, and expressed his hopes that Mrs. Tyrie had not suffered from fatigue, &c., she, unconscious of the irritating nature of the conversation which had taken place between the lovers, kept him talking on indifferent subjects : "How many people had accepted for his mother's party? How long had they known Lord Lorimer? What a droll young man was Jack Knight,"—all of which was exceedingly grating to the high-flown sentiments of sixteen and four and twenty. At length he was allowed to depart, which he did with "a lumpish heart," as Pamela called her own, for he did not like to place himself in opposition to the wishes of his mother, and he saw her determination that he should marry to please her and not himself.

When Cassilis reached Abbotsland, he saw his tranquil stepfather, as usual, in the library.

"My dear boy!" he said, "I hope you have not come to disturb my equanimity by any unworthy petitions; I value my quiet life exceedingly. It has always been a comfort to me that you have no brothers and sisters. A score of little Æneases to play up and down the hall and passages might have been some

consolation to Dido, but they would be a most frightful nuisance to any one who loved a quiet life."

Cassilis looked troubled and perplexed. What did his stepfather mean? Could he anticipate what Cassilis was about to ask of his mother, and deprecate the disturbance likely to take place?

"I have no plan subversive of your comfort, sir," he said. "Of what do you suspect me?"

"Of a secret design to turn my library into a place of ill uses: to cover the table with looking-glasses and washing stands—to turn my ink stand into a powder puff box—my arm-chair to a quasi bed for some bachelor who cannot be turned out of the house at four o'clock in the morning, and to take all the accumulated papers, which are as precious to me as bank notes, and which have remained under their marble weights for years, expecting the sorting which never comes, and put them behind the books again, whence they will never emerge again, or if they do, I shall never have the courage to replace them as they stood, and where each bundle keeps my thoughts like guardians watching over it."

"I have no thought of the kind now. I

confess I did look with a longing eye to this—one of the largest rooms in the house—as a supper room, but I abandoned it in deference to your comfort. Can you tell me where I shall find Mrs. Seaward?”

“Ah! she is to be the victim, is she? Well, she is not in the best of tempers, poor dear woman. Something did not go right at the ball. I believe she has been accustomed to have her own way in this world so long, that if she meets opposition from those whom she cannot control, she rages in a maundering way against those over whom she possesses influence. My dear boy, I have a true affection for you. If you would be a happy man, never marry. Your mother is a very good woman, very perfect in all the relations of life; yet, between ourselves, a housekeeper at sixty pounds a-year would have suited me much better.”

“Ah, sir, you did not feel thus at my age.”

“Yes I did,” said the magistrate, testily; “but she persuaded me out of my right judgment, and I have repented ever since. Now you may go.”

“What an incentive to matrimony,” said Cassilis, leaving him to see his mother; “but

probably they are not as well suited to each other as Margaret and I should be."

Cassilis went to his mother's dressing-room, where she was seated in a dull conclave with her sister. The last-named lady was not properly got up, and resented the intrusion.

"I did not know you were going to have visitors, Clarinda. I thought dressing-rooms were places sacred from young men."

"You were never blest with a son so certain of a mother's welcome as I am," cried Cassilis, putting a good face on the matter.

Mrs. Seaward gave a sour smile, and pointed to a chair, whilst Jane left the room.

"I am sorry to have disturbed you," said the youth. "Mother, I want a card to invite Miss Petrel to your party, and I wish you to call on her."

"On what ground, Cassilis?"

"Because I wish it," replied the son. "I might tell you that she is a beautiful girl, and would be an ornament to your fête; but I will go farther, and say that I love Margaret Petrel, and mean to marry her on the first opportunity, and to this I hope you will consent."

"How do you anticipate supporting your wife?" asked Mrs. Seaward, in the most cruel

of tones. She knew all the question meant ; she knew that it depended on her to give or withhold the five hundred a-year she had been for some time past allowing Cassilis for his subsistence.

“ You give me a certain sum yearly, my dear mother ; I do not believe you would be so cruel as to deprive me of it. Indeed, an addition of two hundred more would be what you have sometimes spoken of as a suitable sum on which I might begin housekeeping with my future wife.”

“ I never can consent to your marrying that girl who calls herself Margaret Petrel. I think it was a piece of intolerable impertinence in Mrs. Tyrie to produce her at a county ball. Edgar Petrel, a wild young midshipman, married a common mine girl of bad character, who was taken up for theft, tried, and convicted, and was for some time in the county gaol. I say he married her, but even that point is not made clear. I never saw the parish register. Your stepfather committed her to gaol for theft.”

Cassilis remained thunderstruck as his mother spoke ; the remembrance of Pleasance came before him in her sad, placid loveliness, the very image of feminine purity and refine-

ment. "I could almost swear," said he, "that you are misinformed. I never saw such a contradiction as is offered to your statement in the years of faultless morals in which that widow has been pre-eminent, never descending from her pinnacle of sorrow to a second marriage."

"You fall in love with a bold girl, and fancy that everything belonging to her is perfection. As to her mother's not marrying again"—(Mrs. Seaward felt touchy on this point)—"I should like to know who would have consented to link his life with hers with such antecedents?"

"I must be sure of these circumstances," said Cassilis, "before I consent to admit them as a legitimate ground of reproach."

"You had better ask your stepfather," said Mrs. Seaward. "I believe he committed the woman, Pleasance Fern, to the county gaol for stealing a gentleman's purse."

CHAPTER XIII.

"If he acts piously, soberly, and temperately,
He acts prudentially and safely."

SOUTH.

CASSILIS left his mother abruptly, and went back to the library, where his stepfather was deep in the *Times* newspaper.

He raised his head. "What, again? You found the weather stormy where you went, eh?"

"Will you give me five minutes conversation, sir? When I was at P—— I became acquainted with a Miss Petrel and her mother; both seemed to be ladies in manner and in conduct. Miss Petrel is niece to Mrs. Tyrie, and granddaughter to Mr. Petrel, of Birchland Rectory. I love Miss Petrel, and have told her so. I have asked my mother's permission to marry her, and she makes it a ground of objection that she is the daughter

of a woman so low in the scale of society, that she has been in the county gaol undergoing her punishment for theft. My mother says that you can tell me all about it, as you committed her."

"Ah, my dear boy, I have heard that story before. It may be true—it is possible—but not likely according to your account of Mrs. Petrel; but as for my recalling what happened so many years since, it is utterly out of my power. But let me give you a little advice: do not look so impatient, nor blunt the nibs of my pens against the table; I will not keep you long. You are too young to marry at twenty-four. You have not been accustomed to do anything but amuse yourself in the world. I doubt your being able to earn fifty pounds a-year as clerk in a counting-house. The money your mother allows you keeps you in comfort, with the run of your home to return to when you are a prodigal and are tired of roaming; but supposing she continued the same income, you would find it quite a different matter when you have to keep house for yourself with a portionless wife—for I suppose Miss Petrel has no fortune. However, you have not got her to consent, seemingly. I do not think it is desirable that you should, for

your own sake. She is very eager that you should marry your stepcousin. In that case Mrs. Petrel's money and your mother's would ultimately flow into one channel. Love lasts but a short time; at least, that impulsive ardour that now actuates you. Margaret is a very pretty girl, of suitable age and rank. You had better marry *her*. You can tell the other young lady that your parents will not consent to your marrying her; you need not insult her, of course, by telling her the reason alleged by your mother. The engagement made for you by your relatives with the other Margaret is a sufficient reason. You think that one woman only could make you happy now. Ten years hence, supposing you to be blessed, as you would call it, in the fulfilment of your wishes, you will probably be of opinion that you have taken the wrong one. Of one thing be certain: you cannot marry without an income; and if I know your mother, she is not the person to give it to you."

Cassilis was too much moved to reply. He left the room, and returned to his mother.

"Well?" she cried, triumphantly.

"Well, madam, my father remembers nothing of the circumstances; but as you dis-

approve of my addressing Miss Petrel, and as I shall never have any other woman——”

“That is nonsense, Cassilis——”

“Permit me to finish, madam. It is impossible for me to remain any longer in your house when my doing so may be misrepresented, now that your wishes with regard to my cousin Margaret have been so distinctly expressed. You will permit me to leave you, therefore, and I shall quit the neighbourhood early to-morrow morning; I hope your party may go off successfully, as I shall not be present to assist in carrying out your wishes.”

The blow told. “My dear Cassilis, it is impossible that you can leave home with this dreadful party coming off. You know you have had all the ordering.” Mrs. Seaward ran over all her difficulties in her mind: the officers from the X—— barracks, and their beds and entertainment at the neighbouring town; the band to have conveyance provided; the ladies to be danced with; the coachmen’s and footmen’s suppers to be seen to; the gentlemen’s carriage-horses to be housed and fed, and the carriages to be sheltered in case of rain. “Oh!” she sighed, “if Mr. Seaward were but the husband he ought to be, I

should not be compelled to soothe Cassilis when I know I have reason on my side. My dear boy, you must *not* leave home before the party. Whatever domestic disagreements there may be, one must keep a good appearance before the world."

Cassilis saw his power, and used it. "I can only remain, my dear mother, on one proviso: you have said that Miss Petrel is the daughter of an abandoned woman. If you ask Mr. Knight, he will tell you that Mrs. Edgar Petrel has for the last fifteen or sixteen years lived an exemplary life at Plymouth, that she has brought up her daughter to be a grace to society, and you must see that there is nothing to prevent your noticing Miss Petrel, as Mrs. Tyrie has already done."

"What would you have me do?" asked Mrs. Seaward, gloomily.

"I would have you call on Miss Petrel and leave a card of invitation to the party. I am sure Mrs. Tyrie will be pleased."

"I do not see why I should please *her*," replied the lady, who felt herself worsted in the encounter.

"You will do what will seem right in the eyes of society, my dear mother. You may object to a young lady as a daughter-in-law

who is a connection of the family, but you cannot object to her as a guest at a ball, when no one can bring any clear charge against her, save too great a share of beauty for the peace of mind of her rivals."

"You will understand that I give you no permission to address Miss Petrel with any intention of marrying her."

"Not at present, my dear mother," said Cassilis, smiling; "but I am sure you would not be obstinate in your opposition to the dearest wish of my heart."

In Mrs. Seaward's mind she determined that though she would do nothing to show any approbation of an engagement between Cassilis and Miss Petrel, she would not irritate her son by recurring to the subject before the party.

Cassilis returned to X—— and left his card, for Aunt Mary had carried Margaret out in the carriage to choose from some head-dresses one most becoming for the party at Abbotsland. Margaret did not say why she wished to remain at home; she felt no certainty that Cassilis would call again, and was too proud to own that she expected some one who might possibly disappoint her.

She was vexed when she saw his cards on

the hall table on her return. By the side of them were those of Mrs. and Mr. Seaward engraved on the same plate. There were two, and Mrs. Tyrie asked the servant for whom Mrs. Seaward had inquired.

"For you, ma'am, and for Miss Petrel."

"I am so glad, Margaret," said Aunt Mary, taking up the cards. "Now we must see about your dress." Margaret followed her up to the drawing-room. "You see, my dear, the satin is as good as new; we will have a new skirt of tulle made, and some different flowers, and it will look like a new dress."

"I am not certain I shall go to the ball, auntie."

"Not go, my dear!"

"No; I am almost certain I shall not go—except under peculiar circumstances—they may exist, however. Mr. Cassilis Forrester expressed great attachment for me before he went abroad. When we met, unexpectedly, and you introduced us at the county ball, he had not condescended to recognize me. When we were walking together he renewed his protestations of attachment, and said he would obtain the sanction of his parents, and call to propose for me in due form to-day. He came, you remember, whilst we were at luncheon,

and I found that he had not mentioned the circumstance to his friends. We parted in mutual discontent, but it would seem that he must have exerted some influence over Mrs. Seaward, or she would not have left the card and the invitation for me. You see he has called, so he may have an explanation to give, and a consent to convey ; if not, I had better decline. I do not like the appearance of going 'on trial' like a horse to be criticized, and accepted or rejected according to the wisdom of 'a multitude of councillors.' "

"My dear, I think you are unreasonable. Why should any family decide on the selection made by a son without using their own judgment ? and how are they to judge without making themselves acquainted with the object of their son's preference ?"

"It may seem like splitting hairs, auntie, but let them come here, or go to my mother's house to see me. They showed no inclination to cultivate my acquaintance at the ball last night. The more I think about it the less I like the idea of going."

"My dear Margaret, the ball will be a wonder of balls, such an one as was never known in the county before. You can have blush roses—so far prettier than the dead-

white girls must wear at their first appearance. You are so very much shut up with your mother at home—really such a chance does not occur to a girl once in a hundred years.”

“I think I ought to go back to my mother. Poor mamma! she is so lonely!”

“All mothers like their daughters to go out and have an opportunity of forming new connections, my dear. You may do much better for yourself than to marry Cassilis. Mr. Franklin is very much attracted by you. He is very good-looking, and has far more money than young Forrester.”

Margaret made a gesture of impatience. “Auntie, you loved my uncle, and married him because you loved him.”

“Yes, my dear. It was good luck that I loved in the right place. Luck has a deal to do with happy marriages; and we have loved each other ever since after a most comfortable fashion.”

Margaret thought that love could never condescend to be comfortable. Young people forget that the period of ecstatic happiness granted to young married lovers lasts nominally a month, whilst it may be hoped that the comfortable stage may continue for de-

cedes, yet they would sacrifice the last for the first. "Whether I go or not will depend on Cassilis," she said; and her aunt replied—

"We had better have the alterations made in the dress, and order the blush roses."

That evening Margaret received a note from Cassilis—her first love-letter—but the heart-beating anxiety with which she received it took from her all the pretty girlish flutter which most young people feel on such occasions. She was deadly white, and her hand shook on breaking the seal, so that Aunt Mary was full of sympathy, and carried back her thoughts to the time when she used to steal at night into the old orchard by the side of the rectory, and look if it were light enough, or feel if it were too dark, for a moss-covered brick under a favourite apple-tree, where Hal Tyrie used to deposit his effusions, to the great disturbance of a colony of earwigs—those tenderest of mothers, who so sedulously collect their broods after an alarm—Aunt Mary always used to take her pocket full of apples to eat after she was in bed, whilst she read the expressions of Hal Tyrie's devotions. She had a very keen relish for both the fruit, and the flowers of rhetoric. Margaret, with her elbow resting on a rose-wood

table, with all the surroundings of a luxuriously-furnished room, was not so happy as *she* had been when she snatched a fearful joy in the Birchland orchard; "but then," said the affectionate wife to herself, "there is no one in the world to be compared to Hal."

Cassilis wrote as follows :—

"I was vexed and disappointed not to see you, beautiful Gabrielle. What I have to say would be so much better spoken than written. My mother could not at first bear the destruction of the dream she has nourished for so many years that I should marry my step-cousin; it is therefore not to be wondered at that she did not assent at once to my wish to engage myself to you without delay. She reminded me of my dependence on her for an income, and my stepfather followed on the same subject, saying what was cold-hearted and sensible, no doubt. It seems to me that parents who do not bring up their sons to earn money by any profession, are like the unprincipled regents of royal minors, who keep them uninformed that they may govern only under their influence. They say, 'You cannot use your arms,' when they have kept them bound so stringently that use is unfa-

miliar and futile in its attempts for self-aid. My mother, however, gave me reason to hope that she would ultimately give way to my wishes. Her calling on you and leaving her card, which she promised to do, is a step in the right direction. You will come, my darling Gabrielle—I love to think of you by that name, under which I first addressed you. The absurd objections made by my parents will vanish like mists before the sun of your presence. They must see that you are the most beautiful of your sex ; and when they know more of your character and disposition, they will recognise the truth that your beauty is the least part of your attraction. I will call to-morrow. I must be early in X—— about various arrangements for the ball, in which I now take a real interest, as the person whom I love best in the world will be present.

“ Your sincere and loving

“ CASSILIS.”

“ Well, my dear, and what does he say ?” said Aunt Mary, who had been waiting impatiently till Margaret had read the letter over slowly for the second time.

“ Nothing very decided, aunt. He says that he thinks his mother is yielding ; that

her opposition will be short-lived when she knows me, and a great deal more in that way. I do not call it satisfactory, but I should be sorry to vex Cassilis by not accepting his mother's invitation."

"Men," said Aunt Mary, "are the biggest fools in the world. Many women are fools, but the folly of man has a supremeness about it which is surprising."

"Very likely, Aunt Mary; but in what way do they show this extraordinary absence of intellect?"

"By thinking that as soon as they fall in love with a girl, all their female relatives will follow suit and love her too. There are some circumstances where this may be the case; but even then the man must not love, but may marry the lady. If the chosen one be crooked, squinting, weak of intellect, and both rich, and willing to be plundered in small ways, the female relatives will pronounce her to be the most charming and amiable of her sex. If Cassilis thinks that his mother and step-cousin are going to love you when they find you sing like a nightingale, and are well educated and conversational, and in every way cut out your aunt, it shows such a state of Bœotian stupidity, as I should have thought even a youth was incapable of."

"I suppose it is that men cannot judge where they have felt no similar petty jealousies," replied Margaret, not liking to hear Cassilis called stupid.

"They might," replied the aunt. "Men are quite as jealous of each other as women can be. They are jealous—the young ones—if their companion has on a better-cut coat than themselves, or if he rides a better horse in the hunting-field, or beats him in shooting, cricket, boating, or any trial of skill or strength. I am not sure that my darling old Hal would not feel jealous if he thought his friend could produce a better bottle of wine than himself, or if the house of Brownrigg and Dunstable brewed better beer than the firm of Tyrie and Franklin."

"I never could like those people," said Margaret.

"No, I do not think you could. It would be better to marry Mr. Franklin, whose income is ample to marry when he pleases, and whose parents would think themselves honoured by having you for a daughter-in-law."

"Oh! aunt, do not talk about it!" said the girl, impatiently. "I do not like him!"

"But why?"

"He has a disagreeable little hop in going round in the waltz."

"My dear, you are as silly as Cassilis! Married folks do not waltz together in society, so the hop would not matter. If you are determined to marry Cassilis, you had better make yourself as agreeable as you can to his mother. Women always combine to make the sweets or bitters of home. A man's intentions on that point may be excellent, but the woman's will overrule them. In the household we speak of, Mr. Seaward can do less than most fathers, as Cassilis is only his stepson. Will you show me the young gentleman's letter?"

"No, aunt; not unless he gives me leave; as he probably wrote it under the impression that it would only be read by me. I will ask him if I may."

"Oh! it is of no consequence," replied Aunt Mary, feeling a little rebuffed, but too good-natured to resent the refusal. "Very likely there may be some bad spelling in it; and young gentlemen belonging to some of the best families in England are too highly taught to be able to spell. Half the young men who cannot pass competitive examinations break down in the spelling."

Margaret was so provoked at this unjust imputation on the orthography of her lover,

that she felt inclined to resort to the expedient of Miss Brookes, maid of honour to Catherine of Braganza ; but she remembered that Miss Brookes was dealing with her own property, whilst she was entrusted with that of another ; so she only said that the letter referred to was quite perfect in spelling, writing, and punctuation. " And you know, auntie, that I am a pretty good judge, as my mother and I took such pains to correct Edgar, your boy, and the result was that he was complimented by the examiners."

Aunt Mary thought for a moment, whether she should resent the imputation on her son's ignorance, before Margaret and her mother took him in hand ; but as she was pretty well convinced of the truth of the allegation, she determined to let the matter pass. It ended by Margaret's writing a formal acceptance of the invitation for the ball.

Then she sat down to tell her mother everything ; but with every disposition to be truthful, she coloured her facts with the rose light of hope. Cassilis had his mother's preconcerted plans for another marriage to break through ; but he had partially obtained her consent, and would no doubt do so effectually when she saw how very much his happiness

depended on his marriage with her. She hoped her darling mother would not feel the additional days of Margaret's absence very unbearable. She would return to her on the day after the ball. Sally was quite anxious to return. Poor dear Sally! she was very useless to her in her aunt's house. She was only worth keeping as an escort to return home.

Pleasance felt mortified at this contempt for Sally. Sally was so invaluable to her comfort, almost to her life, for she could not eat anything cooked by Louisa, and felt too much depressed at her future prospects to care to instruct her. She was weighed down by an approaching evil, dimly seen descending on her, which would crush the life out of her. Wherefore, then, seek to prolong it? Truly a succession of ill-cooked dinners, which are consequently left uneaten, are enough to occasion a lingering suicide!

But now Pleasance might count the days before the return of her girl and of Sally;—so many hours to sew, so many to walk, so many to sleep, so many to read by the sick, so many to try to forget the doom which she felt to be in store for her—something terrible and crushing, but unknown!

CHAPTER XIV.

“Here the lone hour a blank of life displays.”

ON one occasion Pleasance was lingering in the church which contained the ashes of the dear friend, whose loss was every day more grievous to her. Their intercourse had been

“Ne’er ruffled by those cataracts and breaks,
Which humour interposed too often makes.”

Had she been alive now, how different would the days have passed in the mutual interest of Margaret’s letters. These thoughts filled her mild blue eyes with tears, and her throat with a feeling of suffocation. She wiped the drops away quietly as she left the side aisle, whence she had been observing the tablet to her friend, which was near the larger one to her husband and to Lieutenant Heathdale. She neither sought nor shunned observation ; no one in the world would now care whether she smiled or wept. She felt herself as free

as an impalpable spirit. Even the love of her child seemed to have waxed cold. The longing for human sympathy is so great, that she desired sometimes to call on some of the families with whom she was slightly acquainted, and tacitly beg for an hour or two of human converse; but the remembrance that if all were known she should be considered unfit to associate with them, made her return to the sad dwelling from which all light and life seemed to have been extinguished by Margaret's departure. There she wore away the weary hours, saying, in the words of Job—"When it is morning, I say, When will it be night? when night cometh, When will it be morning?"

As she left the church, a tall man, who came up the aisle, meeting her and observing the traces of emotion in her face, asked the pew-opener whether there was not a monument or tablet erected to the memory of Lieutenant Heathdale and Midshipman Petrel, in the church. The woman walked with him to the spot where the inscription could best be read, which recorded the brave act of self-sacrifice by which the lives of so many of their fellow-creatures had been saved by these two officers, before they were drowned in their third venture.

"Who is that lady? Is she a relation of either of the officers?" the tall man asked of the pew-opener.

"Yes, sir; she is the widow of Midshipman Petrel. I remember her well, the morning they were married. He gave me five shillings, though I don't think he could well afford it. She was a delicate, pretty creature, as I ever saw. She looked like a lady, but of course she was not, for she could only make a mark instead of signing her name. She was quite a child: the band of her dress came unpinned, and she asked me for a pin. I made bold to say, 'I wish you joy, ma'am, for you are the youngest bride I ever saw.' And she answered so pretty—'Thank you, ma'am; I am quite fifteen.' There was Lieutenant Heathdale—he gave her away. I knew they would have trouble. Young Petrel had not got a beard on his chin; he was under twenty, I should say."

"Where did the young couple go then?"

"Oh! they went to the lieutenant's house, where his mother lived. Almost directly the young gentlemen went off to sea, and the two women lived together; and then came the dreadful news that the poor young men were lost——"

"And I was saved," murmured the man.

"No, neither of them were saved, sir," said the woman, not hearing distinctly. "One lost her husband; one her only son. They were wonderful cut up. My niece was a gal as lived with them. She said it was dreadful to see them. The little girl, too: she would have her red shoes on to see her papa,—and he was under the waves, and would never see nor know anything any more!"

"And the two ladies lived together after that?"

"Yes, sir. They did say our young clergyman was very sweet on the young widow; but as my Sally said, she will never look at any man in the way of marriage again. She is a widow indeed, and a widow she will die, it's my belief."

"Is that tablet to the memory of the elder lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mrs. Petrel is not in good circumstances, I suppose?"

"I don't know about that, sir. They always pay up reg'lar every week. She never did care to dress like Mrs. Heathdale. Maybe she is a saving her money for miss. She and Sally, my niece, is gone out a visiting. They never spared anything for miss—dresses, or

masters, or anything that was good would not be too good for that girl: the two ladies were crazy about her."

"I suppose Mrs. Petrel would see me if I called?"

"I doubt not, sir. She never says, 'Not at home,' but the slammicky girl she has got there is told to say, 'Mrs. Petrel is engaged.' It is not many people that trouble her—subscriptions and such like only."

The man gave the shilling expected by his informant, and returning to his hotel, wrote the following note to Pleasance:—

"A gentleman, who was under great obligations to the late Midshipman Petrel, would consider himself highly favoured by half an hour's conversation with Mrs. Petrel."

He sent this by a porter from the hotel, and told him to wait for an answer. Then, in the restlessness which attends expectation, he put on his hat and walked up and down the esplanade near the sea.

The ocean was perturbed, and dull in colour; the sky was leaden; the wind was high. The mind of the pedestrian recurred to a scene when the waters were more tempest-smitten, when the skies were loaded with vapour which overhung like a shroud the devoted

vessel, which was slowly sinking into the depths, where those, now standing in despair awaiting their doom, were soon to be engulfed. Then a vessel was seen in the distance, buffeted by winds and waves, and the sailors said quietly that if those they saw in the ship should see their plight, no boat could live in such a sea, and none would be sent.

Here his dreams of the past were interrupted, for the messenger returned with a note from Mrs. Petrel. It was written in a little neat Italian hand, and conveyed the intimation that Mrs. Petrel was at home, and would be happy to receive the writer of the note. The gentleman walked more like a skilled pedestrian than an idler against the strong, bitter wind that opposed him. He liked opposition ; it roused his energies. Fortune made a mistake when he was born a wealthy nobleman. He should have been obliged to cut his way through the world with his wit and with his sword.

He stopped at the small house, and Louisa, with a plain cap and apron put on for the occasion, showed him up to the little drawing-room, and said she would tell her mistress.

There was a Bible on the table, open, and inside a slip of paper, where, in the same

handwriting which he had seen in the note he had just received, was written—

“Measure me the blast of the wind,
Or call again the day that is past—alas !”

The writing was in ink, and had seemingly been left to dry, and had been pushed away to draw the blotting book close to her, when she had answered his note. There was a “Faust” on the table with Retzsch’s Outlines, and “Margaret Petrel” written on the title page ; a “Dante,” with the same inscription. An envelope, half open, with some photographs of Margaret, of which the negative had been taken before she left, and the impressions had been sent to Pleasance on the previous day.

He sat down rather ashamed of having looked at them, hearing Mrs. Petrel’s step on the stairs ; but he did so with a determination to confess to his curiosity before he left the house.

Pleasance came in with a scared, anxious look. She feared all things always, and drew her breath quick, whilst a delicate colour tinged her cheek, from which generally the bloom had fled. Her rippled fair hair was put back from her brow without art, and was

united with the thick braid, which was fastened round at the back of her head. Her visitor did homage to her beauty, and to the general refinement of her appearance. "If," he thought, "I had not seen the daughter, I might think the mother the most beautiful woman I had ever met." Pleasance came down, holding the card which Louisa had given her.

"Lord Lorimer?" she said, interrogatively.

He bowed; and Pleasance motioning him to a chair they both sat down. There was silence for an instant; and Pleasance recovering from her vague apprehension, with the sense which Mrs. Heathdale had impressed on her, that hospitality must be offered to a guest in the way of conversation if not of food, looked out at the sky, across which the ragged clouds were darkly driven, and said—

"It threatens to be a wild night."

"Yes," said her visitor. "I have a yacht in the offing. Not even deadly perils can quench my love of the sea. Will you pardon me, madam, if I recal painful circumstances? Thirteen years ago, I looked on a sky more wild and stormy than this, but it was not from the safe shelter of an English homestead, but on the wind-beaten waves of the Bay of Biscay. We had been tempest tossed for

many hours. The over-burdened ship had sprung a leak, and not all the hands kept incessantly at the pumps could prevent the water from rising. Looming in the distance, we saw a frigate driven hither and thither by the storm, but she at any rate was not sinking. Would she send a boat. The experienced sailors said none could live in such a sea, and the flutter of hope which thrilled through us as we stood on the deck subsided again into sullen despair. At length, we saw through our glasses that a boat was being lowered. How we blessed the brave men who were hazarding their lives to come to our rescue! How we prayed for their safety, on which our own depended. On came the boat, brave hearts urging strong arms. Then came the heart-beating strife which should be saved. We settled it at once: the married men should have the first chance. A boat full was taken off. Life is dear to us all at nineteen. There seemed scarcely a chance that the laden labouring load should reach its destination, but it was the only chance of life. As the last man who could be received in the boat, jumped in, and it was pushing off, many eyes, pleading with intolerable pathos, followed it. Mine met those of a young officer, scarcely

older, it seemed to me, than myself. He answered the silent expostulation in words—‘If I live I will return for you;’ he shouted through the roar of winds and waters.

“I will not delay you to tell how our pulses throbbed as we watched the boat diasappear in the distance towards the vessel. There was a long delay; at least it seemed so to us. They might have capsized the boat, and all have been lost. They might have reached the vessel in safety, and been too much exhausted to return. I said, ‘That young man will return if he is living,’ but no one believed me. I knew he would.

“Presently we saw the boat fighting its way through the angry waters towards our vessel. Then every heart beat high again with hope. As soon as it was sufficiently close to distinguish the faces of our deliverers, I saw his eyes seeking for me. I had not moved, for I was clinging to the vessel with hands and feet numbed, from which sensation was departing, and we exchanged a long look. His countenance was filled with a divine pity, and with a restless anxiety to succeed; in mine, no doubt, with the hungry craving for prolonged life, which I saw in every face around me.”

“You saw him ! you saw him !” exclaimed

Pleasance, with her face working with emotion, and wet with tears, her hands knitted together in supplication, and her arms extended on the table towards him. "You saw him nearly three years after I did. Oh, tell me!" and her utterance was lost in sobs.

"Calm yourself, madam," Lord Lorimer continued. "His face was to me as the face of an angel. I have never seen but one with the same beauty of expression. As the boat came to the side of the vessel he called to me to jump. I did so, and he caught me just in time to prevent my being lost by the swaying away of the boat. His men, who seemed to adore him, took care by seizing him that he should not lose his balance, which, but for aid, he probably would have done. The boat was crowded, and could not receive another living creature, yet there were still some poor fellows clinging to the vessel. 'We will return for you,' the lieutenant said; 'we will return for you,' reiterated the young officer, and the throats of the shipwrecked men, so soon to be filled with the salt drenching waters of death, gave a cheer as the boat moved off with her load. We were silent: too anxious to speak, as we returned to the 'Isis.' The rescued crew were taken on board,

and the last thing which I was conscious of, was hearing the words shouted by the two officers in answer to the remonstrances from the ship, 'we have promised.' Probably they thought that, though unable to reach the foundering vessel in time to take the men from it, they might pick up some yet tossing on the surface of the waters, not sucked down by the submerged bark. But night came down, thick and impenetrable. In vain lights gleamed from the 'Isis'—in vain anxious hearts listened for some distant shout to tell that the boat was returning. Those who listened with hearing quickened to the acutest pitch, declared that they heard cries of distress borne on the blast, but no one returned to tell the tale."

The head of Pleasance was resting on her outstretched arms. She had wept till the fountain of her eyes was dry.

"My dear lady!" continued Lord Lorimer, "I respect your grief, but think and receive consolation from the thought that your husband could not have died a nobler death. He might, overstepping the limit given by the Psalmist of threescore years and ten—he might have died, not in the swell of mighty waters—not in tumult of rushing winds and

quivering planks—not in the excitement made in his mind by the conviction that the efforts he was making were exerted in a noble cause, but lying passive on his bed helpless, paralytic, asking, in the hissing treble of age, for the few drops of fluid, which is all that is needed to prolong an existence which can scarcely be considered life—not life-giving, strong, stirred by generous impulses, but pitifully weak, carrying his mind by an effort from one hour to another, and guided to their sequence by the animal craving for sustenance, small as it is when swallowed; miserably irritable to his nurse, yet afraid of her anger.

“Is this a termination to live for? Would you have had your husband for such a death hoard his life? Could the plodding employment of every day have made up in the good they accomplished the glorious concentration of virtue shown on that night of storm and death?”

“We were both so young, we might have lived together for years—an old man and woman loving to the last, a mutual help, a mutual solace; and,” continued poor Pleasance, “then he would have seen my girl: my beautiful Margaret! and he would have been so proud of her!”

"He would," assented her visitor, seeing that his well-meant consolations had failed of their effect.

"The world was a dreary waste covered by thick darkness," said Pleasance, "before Edgar came. Then the sun arose on me ; but just as I was warmed and comforted by its radiance, it was extinguished, even before it reached its meridian splendour. Can you expect me to be comforted, when I have to go darkly all the rest of my days ?"

"My dear lady," said Lord Lorimer, "you must have consolation in that beautiful daughter of yours. You must bear with me a little whilst I talk of myself. The exposure and anxiety I suffered, produced a fever and delirium, which endangered the life your husband had saved. All was confusion in my overwrought brain. The face of that noble youth was ever glaring at me in the repose that followed exhaustion. I was for many months vibrating between death and life ; when I recovered, all my energies of body and brain seemed semi-paralysed. The beautiful image so vividly impressed on my memory, seemed faded in the mists and shadows of time. Years went on—I arrived at the freedom of one and twenty. I still thought of my pre-

server on every stormy night, when the blast roared in the chimneys ; but in the sunshine of day, and the elation of youth and wealth, the remembrance was weakened.

“The beautiful act of self sacrifice, by which the lives of so many had been rescued, was always a gospel to teach me what to do, and what to shun. Your husband not only saved my life, he has tended to purify it. ‘In honour preferring one another.’

“ ‘Greater love hath no one but this, that he gives up his life for his friend.’ But those noble-hearted officers and men gave their lives for their fellow-creatures, of whose very existence they had been ignorant till they saw them clinging death-doomed to the sinking vessel.

“I detain you too long. I saw a young lady whose name was Petrel.—Petrel and Heathdale were never to be forgotten names. I engaged myself to dance with this young lady, when I saw another who resembled her so nearly that, when I saw her at the other end of the room when the dance was beginning, I went forward, and claimed her as my partner. When I drew near she looked up, and I saw the face, which had beamed on me through the gathering gloom of evening, and through the shadows of death, but younger and softened

into the delicate beauty of girlhood. She protested against the mistake, but I disregarded the protest. I could not give up what fortune had flung in my way. I found her highly educated, and with a natural vivacity of intellect, most rare at any age, and which rendered her the most charming partner I had ever had the good fortune to secure for an evening."

"Margaret wrote to me about you," said Pleasance, simply. "I thought it was so very kind in you to ask her to dance so often, because, poor girl! she knew scarcely any one at X——, and I have heard that a plain girl who has a large acquaintance, has a better chance than a handsome one who is unknown, I do not know from my own experience," she added, "because I was never in a ball-room. I am greatly obliged to you, Lord Lorimer, for dancing with my girl."

Lord Lorimer now looked uneasy, and played with some quill pens till he blunted their points, pressing them on the table, as if his life depended on determining which side of the divided nib was the longest. At length, having his [usually pale face slightly flushed, he said—

"Mrs. Petrel, 'all that a man hath would he give for his life,' therefore, he ought to

consider that what he has should be at the service of the relatives of him who died that he might live. I am wealthy. I have no claims on me save those I choose to admit. Sailors are never rich. I declare I am utterly at a loss for words which may express my meaning without offence ; but if you would permit me to place some hundreds of pounds at your bankers, I should go to sleep a happier man than I have been for years. Will you ?”

“ You are very good, sir. Poverty is very dreadful ; it means misery, it means crime, but I have never been poor since I married. I am not poor now at all ; I have all I require, I assure you,” she added, piteously, “ only—only I shall be so glad when Margaret comes back.”

“ Your girl will wish to marry, madam. She will not be less welcome to her husband for being well dowered.”

“ If Margaret’s future husband cannot be content with her youth, beauty, virtue, and culture, and with what small fortune I can endow her, she had better remain unmarried. My husband gave his life gladly ; the gift shall never be cancelled by a money payment received by his widow or by his daughter with my consent.”

"I will live in the hope that in future years I may have some power to do you or yours a service."

"I thank you, sir. You have already done me one of the greatest—you have given me the last news I could ever receive of my Edgar. Moreover, you have passed away an hour which would otherwise have been tedious, by information of the deepest interest to me; and you have presented a picture of the last scenes of my husband's life which will ever remain burnt into my memory."

Lord Lorimer arose, and Pleasance did also. "I am about to return to X——," said he. "I shall remain at the hotel there for a few days, till the fête is over at Abbotsland. I shall meet your daughter there. Can I give her any message from you?"

"Give her my love, and say I am well, and not at all dull. I should like her to have all the enjoyment possible. You will tell her not to hurry, will you not?"

Lord Lorimer saw the self-sacrifice made by the poor mother in saying this, shown in her trembling upper lip and her laden eyelids, and assented.

It had been originally intended that a floral fête should precede the ball at Abbotsland,

but two reasons induced the lady to give it up : one was, the uncertainty of the weather ; the other, the conviction that few folks can endure the fatigue even of pleasure continued over twelve or fourteen hours, and generally cease to be agreeable to each other before the end of that time.

CHAPTER XV.

“Conscience doth make cowards of us all.”

THE hour arrived for the beginning of the festivities. The high arched window in the hall was blazing with coloured lamps, forming in the centre the letters M. P., showing that the ball was given in honour of Margaret Petrel. The heart of Mrs. Seaward rejoiced as one bevy after another of well-dressed ladies were set down at the portico, and received in succession at the entrance of the dancing-room. Amongst the rest came Aunt Mary and her charge, looking very beautiful with her blush roses.

“I am glad that Margaret has water-lilies,” thought Mrs. Seaward. “Cassilis,” she cried, “there are dancers enough to begin. You dance with Margaret, of course.”

“Of course,” replied her son, and disap-

peared for a moment, coming in sight again with a gleam of blush roses close to his side.

Mrs. Seaward confronted him. "Cassilis, your cousin is waiting for you. You are bound to open the ball with her."

Margaret withdrew her arm immediately, whilst her lover, with a face flushed with indecision and shame, hesitated.

"Do what your mother wishes," said the girl, and she looked round in the crowd for her aunt, whom the mass of intervening visitors shut from her view. She was as overwhelmed with shame as any lady might be who was detected with a piece of smuggled goods in her hand by a police officer. Those near her must have seen and heard what passed. She fancied she saw derisive smiles on the faces of those surrounding her. It must be worse, she thought, for her namesake, whom she did not see. Every way she turned she was suffocated by white satin, black broadcloth, gauze, and strange faces, bearing either a vacant stare or a company simper. Cassilis and his mother were shut out by the intervening crowd. She felt her heart swelling with a sense of insult and desertion, when a voice she had heard before said—

"Miss Petrel!" and Lord Lorimer offered her his arm, "will you dance with me?" he said, "or would you prefer sitting down?" This he suggested, seeing symptoms of agitation in her quick breathing.

"I am very much obliged to you," she said, looking up in his face with the expression which, by the resemblance to her dead father, went straight to his heart. "Perhaps I had better dance. You are very kind to take pity on one deserted by her partner."

"The word pity is totally inappropriate. I am proud that you condescend to accept me." They wedged themselves towards the centre of the room where a space was left roped off for the dancers.

Where was Mr. Franklin all this time? He had split his glove, and had been obliged to have it mended in the room which Cassilis had provided for the repairing of similar accidents. When Margaret stood still for a moment to recover her breath, he came up and asked her for the next dance, and as it was a quadrille, she assented. Then Jack Knight came up with a similar request, looking exceedingly ruffled and discomposed, and was engaged for the following galop. Lord Lorimer remained with Margaret till Mr.

Franklin came to claim her, and then, not feeling disposed immediately to ask the Queen of the evening, he sauntered to the library, and tapped thrice, a preconcerted signal, which Mr. Seaward answered immediately, and Lord Lorimer seated himself by the fire in one of the easy chairs, his host and guardian occupying the other.

"You will perceive," said Mr. Seaward, "that there are but *two* easy chairs; 'three spoils good companie,' says the very true proverb."

"You seem to have a voluminous journal before you," said his lordship. "Do not let me disturb your researches."

"No, I have found out what I want. There are some things one does not tell the partner of one's life; and I always keep my confession—i.e., my journal, which contains my self-accusations—under lock and key."

"You cannot have much with which to reproach yourself, I should imagine," replied the younger man.

"I do not know," replied the magistrate; "a man who has to decide cases according to law may find that he has committed cruel injustice, though his decision was a legal one. What I have been reading has made me un-

comfortable. I had forgotten the circumstances. Who can remember faithfully what happened fifteen or sixteen years ago? That boy of my wife's has gone and fallen in love with Margaret Petrel. There are two, and, with the perverseness with which young folks always contrive to perplex and worry their elders, he has chosen the wrong one."

"What fault can be found with either?" asked Lord Lorimer, curiously.

"No fault with the young lady; but my wife objects, perhaps not unnaturally, to her son's marrying the daughter of a woman who has undergone imprisonment for theft. I had forgotten all the circumstances, but I called on a fellow named Pike, who was manager of Wheal Constance, and who is at present alive, but partially imbecile from paralysis. I gathered from the broken images of his memory enough to confirm the statement of the poor girl. You may read the entry I have made. How one's mistakes dodge us after the lapse of years. I thought I had done all that was necessary when I told the girl to come to me if she were in distress. I ought to have kept her within my ken. She disappeared, and it turns out that she married a young midshipman, who was lost at sea, and was the eldest

son of Mr. Petrel, who is the father of the girl my wife wishes her son to marry. You see the two sisters have each fine fortunes, and they have taken up the usual desire to unite them at their deaths by the marriage of my wife's son Cassilis and her sister's step-daughter Margaret. And now the boy wants to marry the Margaret who has no fortune to speak of; for the daughter of a midshipman and a mine-girl cannot have much, unless her Aunt Mary should give her anything, which is unlikely, for she has a family growing up, though her husband is very wealthy. This pre-occupation of the boy's is the more provoking because the girls are as like as two peas—one rather a fairer one than the other; but a man might be well content with either. It really is very perverse."

"My dear sir," said Lord Lorimer, "should you have been equally content to take the sister of Mrs. Seaward some years ago, when you were young?"

"Certainly not," replied the magistrate. "Such an anatomy as that instead of a plump little woman!—the analogy does not hold good, my friend. But I am puzzled to know what to do to repair the injustice I did to that poor girl, Pleasance Fern. I remember

now, as well as if it were yesterday, her standing up just inside the door, looking hither and thither in a scared way. Pike, of whom she had a horrible dread, was seated in that chair which you now occupy. I found out afterwards that he had offered her the purse to become his mistress, and dropped it afterwards as he was in the act of flinging stones at her as she clung to the cliff, where she had climbed like a cat for shelter from his violence. She remained there all night, and in the first gleam of the morning, when she got down to return to her grandmother's cottage, she saw the glitter of the purse, and not unnaturally appropriated it. It was in the eye of the law a theft; in the eye of morality it was a very venial crime. She fled like a poor wounded hare with the hounds of justice after her, and was caught where she had fallen, insensible from terror and fatigue. She was carried to the infirmary of the gaol, where she remained a week longer than her sentence provided, being too ill to leave it. She was a modest little girl—virtuous, I believe, in fact—but with probably no settled views of morality. I find that young Petrel settled her with the mother of one of his sailor friends, who educated her. After the death of both officers

the women continued to live together till the decease of the elder lady."

"Then you believe this poor girl was only guilty in ignorance?"

"Precisely so."

"And your wife is about to punish the sin of the parent on the child, by objecting to her son's marriage with Miss Petrel?"

"Yes, she does. I cannot answer for women. I confess I think it an objection to a woman that her mother was low-born, and has, either righteously or not, suffered imprisonment for theft."

"Even though you were the inflictor of the suffering?"

"My dear fellow, when you are arrived at my age you will be as much inclined as I am to take things quietly. I think that the imprisonment for theft is the lever which Mrs. Seaward will use to dislodge the young lady; but, all the same, the real objection probably is the preconceived idea of the marriage of Cassilis Forrester with the other Margaret—a very nice, good girl, who will have plenty of money, and unite the fortunes of the two sisters after their deaths."

"If that be the case, it is useless to try to alter the lady's determination. It is, however, very hard on the young folks."

"I cannot say I admire your stepson much. I saw him look very foolish about half-an-hour ago, when he gave up dancing with the girl he loved to please his mother."

Mr. Seaward smiled. "Had you been his mother you would have thought his conduct admirable."

"I can no more imagine myself a woman and a mother than Lord Byron could fancy himself a servant-girl suspected of stealing a silver spoon," replied the peer. "I judge a man like a man. Perhaps my judgment may be as good as another gentleman's," he said, slyly, "though I am not a magistrate, and do not inflict cruel justice on little girls of fifteen."

"Too bad!" cried Mr. Seaward. "I'll turn you out of my library if this is all I get by confession."

"Pray do not," responded the peer. "The crowd is intolerable to me. It is strange that each of those women might be agreeable if she had space enough around her; but wedged as she is, like a flower pressed into an over full glass, all beauty of form is lost, all grace of action precluded by the juxtaposition. They emerge from the crush with heightened colour and disordered heads, frequently leaving a breadth of gauze under the

feet of their neighbours. Girls, like flowers, spoil each other, and look best singly."

"Whatever they are, and however they look, remember that you keep the word of promise to the ear and break it to the hope if you do not go and dance with some of them. In fact, you were counted on to inspire Cassilis with jealousy by your attentions to Miss Margaret Petrel."

"Which?" asked the peer, smiling. "I take the handsomest of the two, if either."

"Then you will not do what is expected of you; but be off, I will lock up my books and my library, and come out from my tub for a short time." "I shall never get rid of him if I don't," he thought, and they passed out into the crowd of guests.

The dance with Jack Knight had been concluded, when Cassilis came to engage Margaret for the waltz. She said she preferred sitting down, and he assented, led her to a fine conservatory full of rich orange trees and embalmed gloom. The access to this beautiful retreat was known only to the family, and a faint light from the rest of the building penetrated through the entrance only. It was a place for lovers in which to make or make up a quarrel, and Margaret leaned against

the door, still determined not to enter the perfumed shelter till her lover had made what excuses he could muster for breaking his engagement.

"I must have seemed very contemptible in your eyes, my Gabrielle," he said, timidly trying to take her hand, which she withdrew.

"You did," she said, very calmly. "You should have ascertained the amount of your powers before you asked a young lady to dance, and then left her standing alone in the room."

"You left my arm ; I lost you suddenly," replied the young lover. "I confess I should have refused to have given you up, but had I disputed my mother's will at that moment I should have had no chance of obtaining her consent to our union, my beautiful Gabrielle. That consent I mean to ask for to-morrow, as soon as our guests have departed. Say you forgive me," and his arm stole round her waist.

Margaret disengaged herself hastily and decidedly.

"Be so kind as to conduct me to the refreshment room, or to the dancers." Love strove against contempt in her breast.

"Tell me, first, that you forgive me."

"Oh, yes! certainly I forgive you. Indeed,

I can only admire your filial obedience and devotion to your mother's wishes."

"You will hear from me to-morrow, Gabrielle," said the young man, rather crestfallen, "that for the sacrifice I have made to my mother this evening, I shall have good news to give you to-morrow—that is, if you love me as tenderly as I love you?"

Margaret replied not to the interrogation of the tone, but said—"To-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Then she passed him, making her way towards the lighted rooms.

"Say that you will dance with me one dance, Gabrielle."

"Pardon me. I cannot expose myself to the recurrence of a similar insult," and she preceded him to the ball-room, near the door of which, wearing his usual tranquil smile, she found her grandfather, who, by complaining of the heat of the room, had escaped from the clinging arm of his wife, who was fearful of draughts, and preferred semi-suffocation.

"Grandpapa!" she said, "let me take your arm. I do not know where Aunt Mary is."

"Bless my soul, my dear!" cried Mr. Petrel, looking round as if to see whether his wife

could detect him, "what a sad thing that you should not have a partner!"

"Indeed, grandpapa, I had rather stay with you. I want you to tell me so much that I do not know—all about papa, when he was a boy. Why does not my Aunt Margaret come and speak to me; I should love her so much if she would let me."

Here a diversion came in the shape of a tall dragoon, who saw a beautiful girl on the arm of a gentleman he knew, and sauntered up.

"Captain Loosetriffe, I am rejoiced to see you," said Mr. Petrel, heartily. "Are you going to dance?"

"If this young lady be disengaged, and you will do me the honour to introduce me."

"Margaret, my dear—Captain Loosetriffe, Miss Petrel—my granddaughter."

"You are much too young to be a grandfather, Mr. Petrel. I suspect the lady is your daughter, and you are jesting with me."

"She is very like my daughter, and nearly the same age."

"Are you fond of dancing?" said the dragoon, leading off Margaret, whilst Mr. Petrel winked his eyes rapidly,—a usual mode by which he expressed self-gratulation.

"By Jove! I did that cleverly: got rid of

the girl ; a good partner too. Creditable. I wish he would marry her, and take her out of the way. Really, that young fellow, Forrester, might be very well contented with the other girl. I don't think Jane saw me. I'll go and get another glass of negus : it will not do to have that girl finding me again. Dragoons may not come in my way a second time."

Both Margarets had as many or more partners as they wanted. Our heroine steadfastly refused to dance with Cassilis, who was consequently more in love with her than ever. Lord Lorimer danced with Edgar Petrel's daughter several times, but he did not tell her of the circumstances which made her expression so precious to him. The time was unpropitious—the subject too sacred—the scene of that mighty self-sacrifice too distinct in its gloomy grandeur from the softened brilliancy of these luxurious rooms—the wild bursts of the tempest, and the roar of the waters from the joyous dance music, and the forms of youth and beauty in gladsome interlacing from the struggles of many beings in strife against death. He watched over her, and saw with jealous pain that, though she was angry with Cassilis, she loved him still.

Lord Lorimer felt that, with all the virtues

of that young man, he was unworthy of that matchless creature. His reason told him that Cassilis Forrester would make an excellent husband. He was quite welcome to be the very best in the world to the other Margaret, but why trouble him by fixing on that girl, whose countenance could bear to him no message from the depths of the dark waters—no remembrance which bound him to the living by the tie to the dead.

But Margaret loved this fair Adonis; he thought with distaste of his own rugged features—"cut out," as the French say, "by strokes of the hatchet." Sallow and careworn beyond his real age, he was not the man to trip it nimbly in a lady's chamber to the lascivious pipings of a lute, or to look in place under such circumstances. He danced well, as far as having a good ear, a firm step, and a skilful arm for the guidance of his partner, but he did not look as if he enjoyed it, and did not do so, except for his partner's sake.

Morning came, bright and dewy, as the revellers were departing. Lord Lorimer handed Mrs. Tyrie and Margaret into their carriage, and thought that she looked tired and depressed. It is a sad thing to see one's idols deprived of the paint and gilding with

which our imaginations have adorned them, and Margaret was suffering from her keensightedness. She, however, did her lover injustice. He was too fond of her not to make an effort to gain his mother's consent to make her his wife. Of course, they could live very well on five hundred a-year. Cassilis had never kept house, but he was convinced that with a clever, managing wife, such as Margaret would be, he should be perfectly happy on that income. Of course they could live with Mrs. Petrel, and thus save house-rent. Cassilis went to sleep with a grand determination to give up his hunters if his mother gave her consent. He could not marry without her consent, because his only income depended on her will.

CHAPTER XVI.

"To-morrow is the time when all is to be rectified."

SPECTATOR.

MRS. SEAWARD had the credit of having given the best party of the season. All had been of the first quality : supper, wines, ices, music, and beauty. Cassilis had not once danced with that objectionable girl. He had danced frequently with the real Margaret, who seemed in very fair spirits. If occasionally a look of anxiety or a flush of trouble came on her sweet face, it gave a pleasing variety to a countenance which was generally tranquil to a fault, and was open to the charge of immobility.

Mrs. Seaward believed that love had begun to trouble the calm depths of her mind, and Mrs. Seaward was right. She thought, too, that Cassilis must be attracted by the unusual exhibition of emotion in their Margaret. She judged by her own experience, having won

both her husbands by making it evident that she considered them the most worshipful creatures on earth. There are men who are repelled by the idea that a woman adores them, and loathe "the fruit that can fall without shaking." However that may be in the present case, the spirit shown by his Gabrielle in declining steadily to dance with him, made Cassilis more than ever determined to win her for his wife.

When he awoke next morning, all the effervescence of the past draught of pleasure having vanished, the thought of his conversation with his mother did not seem so facile in the cold face of morning as it had done by the light of glass chandeliers. How depressing to the care-burthened mind is the hour of awaking! Ugly thoughts, like burly creditors, knock loudly at the door of one's memory. One, the worst of all, is obscured for an instant by the press of the others, but is soon seen, grim and towering, overtopping them all. It is generally at these morning hours that the infirm mind gives way, and the unhappy victim seeks for a sleep from which the awakening is uncertain, and lost in unknown depths.

Few things occur as they are anticipated.

Cassilis tossed and tumbled about after his first sleep so long, that when at length that coy god responded to his entreaties, he remained insensible to external objects of perception, and heard not impatient knockings at his door. At length he sprung out and opened it, and met the scared face of the lady's-maid.

"Bless you, sir! I thought you might be dead—or gone. I knocked so long, I thought you had left the house. Oh, sir, such trouble! Miss Petrel is lost!"

"Miss Petrel—Margaret! Why, I saw Lord Lorimer hand her into Mrs. Tyrie's carriage."

"It is not that Miss Petrel, it is the other one. Her room is empty."

"Empty!" cried Cassilis. "I'll come directly." And he threw on his dressing-gown and hurried to his mother's room.

"Oh, Cassilis! what have you done to that poor girl? she has been so depressed."

"I should like to know, young man," cried Mr. Petrel, looking very sleepy, his blue eyes sparkling under heavy lids, which gave a meeker expression than usual to his face, "where Margaret is? She is your affianced wife, and you are bound to find her." Here,

feeling his hoseless legs were becoming cold, notwithstanding the furred slippers, he returned to his dressing-room and rang for his bath, feeling he had done all that an anxious parent could be expected to perform.

Mrs. Seaward was weeping, and her sister, whose false front was pushed awry, was finding fault with every living creature in the house.

Cassilis disappeared, and coming back with a twinkle of fun on his face, he said, "You need not have the lake dragged, nor the alarm bell rung. Jack Knight's room is empty also, and his portmanteau gone; a carpet-bag belonging to my cousin is also missing. Folks do not take luggage when they contemplate suicide."

"Oh, gracious powers! that snub-nosed young fellow!" cried the stepmother. "What could she have been thinking of? I shall never recover it! 'What is bred in the bone!' Just like her sister Mary. What a fool I was to think that a Petrel would ever be worth rearing, so strictly brought up, too!"

"Sister!" cried Clarinda, sobbing; "and I had made up my mind that Cassilis should marry her!"

"I suppose it is useless to try to catch them?" suggested Mrs. Petrel.

"Heaven forbid that I should try!" exclaimed the young man. "Knight is an excellent fellow! I wish him happiness with my cousin. I suppose they have made a journey to the north."

There was nothing new to be said, so the good folks thought it better to dress themselves, and seek for comfort in breakfast. Mrs. Seaward, who was most angry, consoled herself by thinking how bad a match Margaret had made, and how very uncomfortable she would find herself when compelled to the restraints of a small income. The worst of it was, that Cassilis would be more determined than ever to marry the daughter of Edgar Petrel. Under the aggravation of this conviction it required a cup and a half of choice sweet-scented orange pekoe, diluted with cream, and the devilled leg of a chicken, before she could recover any portion of her equanimity.

Cassilis meant to attack his mother as soon as he could obtain a quiet audience. He pursued her to her boudoir, after breakfast, and entreated permission to engage himself to Miss Petrel. He desired to marry her at once, asking only that his mother would continue the allowance of five hundred per

annum, which she had given him since he first went to college ; on that he was certain Margaret would be perfectly happy.

Mrs. Seaward was silent for some time, lost in thought. She was not vanquished, but was quietly collecting her forces with a view to ultimate victory. "Do you know with what kind of woman you are connecting yourself in marrying Margaret Petrel?" his mother asked.

"Yes, I know the widowed Mrs. Petrel ; she is a most charming, refined, and cultivated woman, whom I should be proud to produce in the presence of the highest lady in the land."

"This woman, of whom you speak so highly, was taken up for stealing her paramour's purse, and underwent her punishment in the county gaol for the theft."

"Impossible!" cried Cassilis ; "I would wager my life for her innocence."

Mrs. Seaward "smiled superior." "You see how a young man may be taken in by a couple of designing women," said Mrs. Seaward. She hated Pleasance for the praise of her excessive beauty lavished on her by Mr. Seaward seventeen years before.

"I do not know to whom you mean to

apply the epithet : not to Miss Petrel, madam, whom I hope to make my wife."

"Do you mean to accuse me of falsehood?" asked the little plump lady, with an effort to look dignified.

"I accuse you of nothing, except of being misinformed," replied her son.

"Go to your father's library, and ask him if what I say is correct. Moreover, look in the marriage register of Edgar Petrel and Pleasance Fern, and you will find her mark in place of her signature."

The brain of the young man began to reel under the iteration which seemed so like truth. "Father," he cried, entering the library, where Mr. Seaward was sitting, "is it true that the mother of Margaret Petrel was a common girl from a mine, convicted and punished for theft?"

"Certainly."

"That she was a girl of bad character, and stole a purse of money from her paramour?"

"Not exactly. In the eye of the law it was theft. If it had been in France she would have been let off from extenuating circumstances."

"*How* could Edgar Petrel marry such a girl?" As he spoke, he thought of that sad

fair woman who seemed as pure as crystal, and his conscience reproached the expression of contempt.

"Young men are fools, and not to be trusted as to their judgment when they wish to marry," said Mr. Seaward, pointedly. He was thinking of himself, though his match had turned out a prosperous one in worldly circumstances.

"Margaret dotes on her mother," said Cassilis, meditatively. "She has the highest opinion of her."

"Probably," said his step-father, "she has never heard of it. It is most likely that when she got amongst respectable people the process of whitewashing began, and the result has been that the daughter was well educated. It would be unpleasant, however, to go into the world with a mother-in-law who might be pointed at as a gaol bird."

Cassilis winced. He had been brought up in profound respect for one of those minor morals which consist in deference to the prevailing opinion of the world. "It would be imperative that she should not associate with her mother when she was Mrs. Cassilis Forrester," he said, decidedly.

"Such a determination could hardly be

announced to a daughter," said the magistrate. "You had better get out of the affair altogether."

"I *cannot*," replied the stepson, impatiently. "I owe something to myself as a man of honour; besides, I love Margaret too well to give her up, if her mother had been hanged, and her father had stood in the pillory."

"Probably," said Mr. Seaward, "the matter has been forgotten very much, the woman has lived so quietly since. I have no doubt the affair may be smoothed over if she can be induced to see the reasonableness of withdrawing herself altogether from your married life. And now, my dear fellow, I want to get back to my paper. Young folks are so headstrong, that they seldom perceive how much they infringe on the comforts of their elders. The running-off of that girl, too! you were the occasion of that disappointment."

"I really do not see that," said Cassilis, who was generally irritated.

"It is quite evident," replied the magistrate, caustically. "You did not make love to her yourself, and you introduced another man who did."

Cassilis had no answer for this, and sought

his mother, very crestfallen. "I find you are right, my dear mother," he said. "I admit that the circumstances you have told me, and which my stepfather has confirmed, are very unpleasant ones to deal with. I am, however, determined that I will not break faith with an innocent girl, because her mother has been a person of bad character. When Margaret is my wife, I can insist on her dropping all communication with Mrs. Petrel."

Young folks think "all for love" is the flag under which the world sails. Cassilis loves Margaret, and wishes to marry her; Margaret loves Cassilis, and wishes to marry him; ergo, all the loving ties uniting parent and child are to be given up.

This seemed the most natural thing in the world to the youth. Mrs. Seaward had more knowledge of human nature, and fancied that even in the arms of her husband, Margaret might have some lingerings of tenderness towards her mother, who doted on her, and had given sixteen years of her life to devotion to her child. Mrs. Seaward thought she saw some way out of the trouble of this unfortunate connection without irritating Cassilis further.

"It will be better—more delicate, Cassilis—

for you to know nothing of Mrs. Petrel's antecedents. Leave it to me. I will write to her fully, saying that your stepfather and your mother agree to your marriage with Margaret Petrel, and will receive her with the affection and tenderness due to a daughter, on certain conditions, which I will state. You had better not see the letter, so that should Miss Petrel ask what are the contents, you should only be able to give vague answers. It will please her sufficiently if you assure her that matters are in progression towards the accomplishment of her wishes."

Cassilis shrank from the assumption of Margaret's "wishes" to marry him, or any man but he felt that he had gained a great deal in obtaining his mother's consent on any terms, so he said nothing of the anger in which his Margaret had parted from him on the preceding evening, in consequence of his having behaved shabbily about the dancing. He mounted his horse—one of the two hunters which he meant to sell when he married, unless Mrs. Petrel was disposed to defray a large portion of his household expenses—and rode to the town of X——.

Time had passed quickly in these interesting discussions, and Margaret and her aunt

were sitting over a late luncheon, when the knock and ring of Cassilis made the heart of Margaret bound mysteriously. Something in the impatience of the application for admission told her that it must be her lover, to whom she was tenderly attached, notwithstanding the anger with which she had parted from him.

He came in looking rather perturbed, not knowing how his Gabrielle would take his approach, and waiting till the servant had closed the dining-room door. He began to talk hurriedly, with an appearance of agitation, which was due, not to the subject on which he spoke, but to that which occupied his mind. "Have you heard the news, Mrs. Tyrie?" he asked, looking at Margaret.

"My name is not Tyrie," said the lady, gravely. "My aunt is there," bowing across the table to her aunt.

Cassilis was rather discomposed, and hesitated.

"Let us have your news, Mr. Forrester," said the good-natured woman, covering with her plump and jewelled fingers the beginning of a yawn. "Margaret and I are rather fatigued this morning, and we shall be glad to be amused."

"Then prepare. But will you not guess?"

"Somebody was overturned last night going home?"

"I am ashamed of you, Miss Petrel; you have no readiness of suggestion. Of course not one, but three, carriages had accidents going home. I should have thought but small beer of my mother's ale if such had not been the case. Guess again."

"The silver was carried off by sham waiters hired for the occasion," suggested Mrs. Tyrie.

"No."

"Some one is engaged to be married," said Margaret, becoming crimson as soon as she spoke, for she thought that her aunt and Cassilis would think that she pointed at him.

"Worse!" cried the young man.

"Worse, indeed!" replied Mrs. Tyrie. "I wonder what young men will come to next, when they think there is something worse than an engagement?"

"I beg your pardon," said Cassilis, blushing; "I ought to have said better."

"Do you mean that some one is married since last night? That would, indeed, be quick work. Was it Captain Loosetriffe and Miss Douglas?"

"No."

"It is a great favourite of yours—I mean, the gentleman is ; but I cannot answer for the wedding's having taken place quite yet."

"I do not think I have any particular favourite," said Margaret, slowly, as if meditating, "unless it be Mr. Knight." Cassilis laughed. "Is it?"

"Now you must guess the lady. Really I ought to have told in a manner more guarded and circuitous."

"Not Margaret !" cried Mrs. Tyrie ; "not my sister Margaret !"

Cassilis looked disconcerted. He was so entirely engrossed by the beneficial effect that the elopement had had on his own prospects, that with the natural pre-occupation of youth, he had forgotten that Margaret, whose life was so removed from that of Mrs. Tyrie, was really her sister. "My dear lady," he began, "I believe there is no doubt on the subject. Miss Petrel's sleeping apartment was found unoccupied this morning, and also that of my friend Jack Knight. Miss Petrel's maid had also disappeared. A carriage, with four horses, was seen driving very fast towards the station in the grey of the morning, but when the road was so much alive with conveyances from our ball, it did not attract much notice."

"How does my father feel it?" asked Mrs. Tyrie.

Cassilis could scarcely repress a smile. "Mr. Petrel," he replied, "was both sleepy and provoked. He told me that the lady was my affianced wife, of which I was not aware, and that it was my affair, not his, and then sleep conquered, and he went off to bed."

"Just like my father," said Mrs. Tyrie. "Has Mr. Knight any income?"

"Nothing but what his parents may choose to give him. His father is a wealthy man, but probably he did not anticipate keeping a son's family as well as his own, and will not be too well pleased at the necessity."

"How silly of Margaret!" cried the prudent Mrs. Tyrie. "Girls, when they are foolish enough to fling themselves out of a three-pair of stairs window, ought to be sure that they fall on a bed of roses."

Cassilis looked at the richly-furnished sideboard, and thought that Mrs. Tyrie must be thinking of herself. "Those who love," he said mentally, "always find a bed of roses." The roses only last a few days, and the thorns are always obtrusive when they lack their summer clothing. "You shall not frighten me,

Mrs. Tyrie. I know *you* have never repented your nuptials."

"True," said the lady, restored to good temper; "but there are not two Hal Tyries in the world, Master Cassilis," and Mrs. Tyrie arose and went to the drawing-room, and thence to the nursery, to take charge of the infant whilst the nurse had her dinner, Cassilis and Margaret therefore found themselves alone in the drawing-room.

"Margaret," he cried, "my mother consents to my marrying you. Oh, my dear! I am so happy!" Margaret blushed and smiled, for she also was happy, but she did not like the wording of his information. She was the person whose acquiescence ought to have been wooed, not the mother of the bridegroom elect. "My mother is going to write to Mrs. Petrel to settle matters. I hope there will be no objections raised.

'Let us not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments,'"

he continued.

"My mother will be only too happy in my happiness," said the girl.

"Gabrielle, look! I have brought you some trinkets to look at and make a choice from." Margaret hesitated. "To please me, darling

girl! do not hurry; look over them at your leisure. I had better go now," he said, hearing Mrs. Tyrie's step, heavier for the weight of a bouncing boy of twelve months, who stuck out a dimpled finger with the tender wish to scoop out one of the eyes of Cassilis, as that happy lover passed the mother. "Ask Margaret what I called to tell her, Mrs. Tyrie," he exclaimed, on bidding the lady good-bye.

"No need; I think you have told us enough for one morning," said Margaret's aunt.

CHAPTER XVII.

"There's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream."

WHEN the hall door slammed after the exulting young man, Mrs. Tyrie entered the drawing-room, and found Margaret peering out of the window to have one last glimpse of the form she so tenderly loved. "He will be sure to return again very soon," she said to herself, and turning to the room she saw her aunt's inquiring face.

"What is this, my dear? Has Cassilis declared himself?"

"Yes, auntie."

"Well, Margaret, you will do as you please, but take my word for it, Mr. Forrester is the wrong man, and in the wrong place."

"I am sorry you think so, for I love him, and I hope to marry him."

"My dear child, Mr. Franklin would give one of his eyes for you. He is independent, and Cassilis must draw his income from his mother, who will grudge him every sixpence she has to allow him. Men who are independent by birth, or rely on their own exertions to form an income, are so much more agreeable as husbands than good sons dependent on their mammas' pleasure."

"I do not think I can ever repent of marrying Cassilis, my dear aunt; so good a son will make an excellent husband."

"I wish you joy of him, my dear Margaret," said Mrs. Tyrie, defiantly. "Can your mother afford to give you any income?"

"I do not know; I have never wanted money, or anything that money can give. I know nothing of its value."

"In that case I would advise your deferring your marriage until you are rather better informed."

"We shall see, auntie. I am not in a hurry," replied the girl, too happy to resent her aunt's unpleasant common sense.

Margaret retired to her room, to pour out all her bubbling happiness to Pleasance. "My own dear mamma, I was not at all happy last night, things did not go well between me and

‘Cassilis, though I dare say he was right in obeying his mother, who is, I think, the most disagreeable little woman I ever saw; but this morning he came and told me that his mother and stepfather had consented to his marrying me at once, and that his mother had written to you about necessary arrangements. I am sure I do not know what they mean. I am confident that you will do everything in your power to secure my happiness. Oh, mother! I do love him so! I know now how you loved papa; and I understand, for the first time, your terrible and enduring grief at losing him. Poor dear mamma! I trust nothing will ever part me from Cassilis, save death, at the end of a very long life. What a light love gives to every object. I had always hitherto turned over the pages of music containing ‘John Anderson my Jo’ with indifference; now I read them with tears beaming in my eyes, and thinking of the clustering curls of Cassilis, and looking forward fifty years, I cry

‘A blessing on your frosty pow,
John Anderson my Jo.’

I daresay Cassilis will bring me down himself to see you, when everything is settled; but Mrs. Seaward is one of the most formal

women I ever saw, and I should suspect the most narrow-minded. I hope she will be satisfied with duty, for I can never regard her with love. I believe that Cassilis dotes on her; it is all right that he should do so. I wish there was not a look in his face now and then which reminds me greatly of his mother. I cannot but regard it as a little leaven, which may leaven the whole lump, as a grain of mustard-seed, which, though the smallest of seeds, may overshadow ultimately the whole beauty of his countenance—at least, to me. I shall be impatient for your answer, dearest of mothers. I know you will be glad—I saw your dear face white with anxiety when I was watching for a letter from Cassilis, which never came. I get angry in remembering this for your sake as well as my own. My aunt was asking me if you could afford to give us money. I said I knew nothing about money; I had always had whatever I wanted from you, and I had no doubt I always should. She told me, rather sharply, that if I knew nothing about money, I had better not marry till I did. I daresay that Cassilis will teach me all that I need know of the management of an income. I do not suppose he ever exceeded his allowance. He has brought me some beautiful trinkets to

choose from as a present, to be a remembrance of our engagement. I have not looked over them yet, but I should like, if possible, to have a brooch resembling the one papa gave you on your wedding-day. Dearest mamma, I know you will be so happy when you get this, so blessed in my blessings.

“Your affectionate daughter.”

Margaret had not written very punctually lately. When folks are happy they are too much occupied by the feeling to express it. When, as Margaret said, things do not go well, it requires a great effort to write as if they did, so it ends by the letters being intermitted.

Pleasance, pale and wasted, always felt her heart beat wildly as the postman's knock sounded at the door of her neighbours, and she swallowed down her disappointment as she best might when he did not stop at her door. Now this morning there was the heart-shaking music of his rap. She rushed down, preventing the tardier footsteps of Louisa, and seized two letters; one from her darling, and one in an unfamiliar lady's hand. How happy was the unconscious mother! She ran up the stair breathlessly, and tore open the one from Margaret. How brightly the sun-

beams flooded the room with their light. Margaret had written a long letter—Margaret was happy—Pleasance could see that in the first few lines. She grew more agitated and apprehensive. Was the terrible secret which, by its weight, was to crush her to the earth when revealed, now about to be brought to the notice of the world—to her world—Margaret? With desperation born of despair, she began and read Mrs. Seaward's letter to the end. It was as follows :—

“ Abbotsland,

“ August —, 18—.

“ MADAM,

“ I have no doubt you will be prepared for the intelligence you will to-day receive from your daughter of her engagement to my son, Mr. Cassilis Forrester. A young man who cannot be always under the immediate influence of home, is apt to be attracted by and to form connections with persons who are interested in turning such circumstances to their own account. However, I am not writing to reproach you ; your maternal instincts and the natural anxiety you must feel, *under all the circumstances*, to obtain a good match for your daughter, must plead your excuse for any artifice of which you were guilty in laying traps for my son.

“I have nothing to say against your daughter, and if she be united to me by the ties of relationship, I shall not be found wanting in the affection which is the result of duty. More cannot be expected of me. As my son has not consulted my wishes but his own in this affair, I shall not increase his allowance of five hundred a-year, and I consider that I do what none but a tender mother would do, in continuing the payment of the sum he has hitherto received, but I will not consent to the match unless you, madam, will produce an equal sum settled on your daughter. If you cannot or will not do this, the negotiation will be considered terminated.

“There is another point to which it is painful to me to animadvert: you, who know too well the shameless nature of your past life, must be aware that if your daughter is to be received into decent society, it must be by the connection between you being severed. Nothing need be said on the subject to your innocent child. If you love her, as the most abandoned sometimes love their offspring, you will carry this out without further prompting.

“I am yours sincerely,

“CLARINDA SEAWARD.”

Pleasance read, and felt every sentence as a fresh stab. The torture culminated in the last sentence. I have seen a picture of a martyred woman kneeling to receive decapitation. There was no wrestling against inevitable destiny in her downcast face; no appeal to Heaven, no exultation at the hope that justice would there be meted out for the wrong done her on earth. Pleasance meekly received the agony. No doubt Mrs. Seaward was right; she was unfit to be received into decent society; she had taken the purse knowing it belonged to her master. That he was unworthy did not exonerate her from the crime for which she had been imprisoned. She had been virtuous because she loved Edgar. Had she never known him she would probably have sold herself, as any number of her companions did, whose beauty gave them the temptation to fall victims to Mr. Pike. Nothing in this world is washed out. She had learnt from that blessed friend who had been removed from her, the awful purity of virtue, and had worshipped it for years, but that could not obliterate the past. "Oh! that cruel, cruel sunshine!" she cried, turning from it, and burying her face in her hands. "There is nothing covered that shall not be

revealed, nor hid that shall not be known," were words that rang in the ears of the unhappy woman. Would they tell her Margaret? Would the child who had hitherto regarded her with a feeling of respect and affection, amounting to worship, now look on her as a cause of disgrace to herself, a creature whose very existence would be a slur on the brightness of her position, and at best to be regarded with a shuddering pity? "Oh, that I were *dead—dead!*" she cried, with a sudden burst of anguish which formed itself into words. She stood upright, and gazed fixedly on the sea. "To-night, when the dark comes, no one would know it, my Edgar suffered it; it would not be more than he felt, the suffocation, the chill; then self-slaughter is a sin;" God would know it; God might separate her from Edgar in another world if she rushed into the unknown land unsummoned. "Death would come—must come soon," she thought, looking at her wasted hands. "Why should she not die? Margaret would be happy in the arms of her husband."

The poor mother took up the letter from Mrs. Seaward again, in the hope of obtaining some consolations from it as regarded Margaret's future happiness.

"She will not be found wanting in the affection which is the result of duty. Perhaps that would be the best to depend on: not charming by its lively warmth, but to be depended on in difficulty and danger. She says, too, that my innocent child need not know. Bless her for that! that is indeed a comfort."

But thoughts came too quick for any calm of consolation. She had been awaiting the blow of fate ever since Margaret had left her. Margaret's marriage must be the knell of her lost happiness. Mr. Seaward was the name on the card given to her by the magistrate who had committed her to prison—who had subsequently offered her help if she should appeal to him. No doubt when Cassilis Forrester had applied to his mother for her consent, Mr. Seaward had stated the whole circumstance—at least, so far as this, that Pleasance Fern was committed to prison for theft, and that Margaret was her daughter. The poor mother did not rebel at this; it was only what was natural. Possibly had she been on the vantage-ground of always having been innocent, she might have judged another as cruelly, and acted on the judgment, deeming it right to do so.

“Ah ! gently scan your brother man,
Far gentler sister woman ;
Though they may gang a kenning wrang,
To step aside is human.”

But she must face the dreadful penalty of her sin. Margaret, the creature on whom she had doted for fifteen years, was to be torn from her for ever. She was to be taken out of her life. How would the girl bear it ? Alas ! Pleasance knew the law of nature too well to doubt that the woman would cleave unto her husband. It was a blessing to think that in her new-found happiness Margaret would not miss her. But when she thus tried to console herself she burst into agonizing sobs and tears.

Pleasance had read a fact in history which took place either at the beginning of the present, or the termination of the last, century. A young wife of nineteen, whose husband was at sea, being reduced to starvation, went into a linen-draper's shop, and took up a roll of print. The attendant detected her, and she laid it down again on the counter. She was tried and condemned to death—oh, beautiful humanity of civilized England !—and her infant of five weeks old was taken from her breast as she ascended the scaffold.

Pleasance had never remembered this without getting up hastily and walking about the room, to try to escape from the sting of the recollection. The lively sympathy of the mother fancied the agony of the poor girl as she listened to the distant wail of her infant which she was never more to soothe, and thought that the death-pang must have been merciful in comparison.

Such things are done in the world, and called justice! Perhaps those who were so just as to hang the poor starving girl for a roll of print were good husbands and fond fathers. When Pleasance thought of this legal cruelty she felt that her life had been happy in comparison. She had lived thirty-three years in the world, and had not suffered poverty for half that time. A terrible misfortune had uprooted the tree which sheltered her, but it had left her a tender flower to rear up and expand into beauty; and now she must give up her darling, not to shriek its little life away in the arms of a careless or cruel nurse, but to the care of a fair, well-nurtured youth, whom she loved and who loved her. She would be happy.

Alas! Pleasance fancied her introduced into society, the object of admiration and envy

from her beauty and dignity. "Who was she?" is the question asked. "The daughter of a common woman who was in Bodmin jail for theft." Pleasance wrung her hands in utter helplessness. There was no way out of the terrible truth. If a creature who had been a Caligula in acts were born into the world a humanitarian, and were suddenly made cognizant of the deeds done by him in his former life, he would feel as Pleasance did in contemplating from a purer height the act of which she had been guilty.

For awhile the conviction made her regard Margaret as an avenging angel—a creature who would consider her with shame and loathing in that she was her daughter. The day drew on, with its hot, pitiless light, revealing every corner and cranny of the small room.

"Oh, Margaret! Margaret!" she exclaimed with a burst of unutterable tenderness—"I am ill, my darling! I am wretched! Come and comfort your miserable mother!"

Then she sat up and stared about her, and wondered who had spoken. She must never see her girl again—she knew that. It would interfere with her Margaret's pleasure—her pride—her happiness. She must write to her. That dear child should have no wait-

ing for a letter, as she, alas! had waited. Oh! that she were in the grave—that grave of sand covered with deep waters, lying on the coral beds which, with their insect labours, would soon encase in a curious and enduring sepulchre, her careless bones! Would that she might lie by her Edgar—that friend beyond compare, who had never given her a moment's suffering which he could prevent!

She looked at the sea gloomily: it was bright in a yellow glory—the decline of a spotless day. The expanse of water was void, excepting a small boat which, with its slender mast and deep red sail, was reflected in the quiet ocean. She must write to Margaret. She did so, and then hurried with it to the post-office:—

“My darling, no one prays for your happiness more fervently than I do. I have been unable to write more to-day, and I beg you will tell Mr. Forrester to acquaint his mother that I agree to all her propositions, and will do my utmost to carry them out, so I hope nothing will interfere to prevent your immediate marriage.—Your affectionate mother,

“PLEASANCE PETREL.”

It was too late to see the lawyer that evening. Pleasance had eaten nothing since break-

fast ; for Louisa had placed some dinner on the dining-room table, but finding, after the expiration of an hour, that her mistress had not left the drawing-room, she carried it down again, and consoled herself for the neglect of her cookery by eating it herself and cutting off an appetising sandwich for the baker's boy.

It is so pleasant to have an object for one's little thefts. It would have been a pity that no one should have benefited by her mistress's abstinence. After that she took up the tea, and Pleasance told her to make it ; an unusual piece of confidence in her skill, for her mistress generally enjoyed that simple meal, which was the last she took during the day, and liked to see the infusion properly made herself, with due regard to the boiling of the water. Now, however, she had the privilege of making it with that which was lukewarm, and of this she did not hesitate to avail herself. It was all one to her mistress.

"She makes no bones of anything," said the maid of all work ; "she is wonderful meek now miss is gone."

Pleasance wrote to the lawyers and to her trustee, stating her wishes that five hundred a-year of the sum left to her by her husband,

should be settled on Margaret Petrel, on her marriage with Cassilis Forrester, Esq., for her sole and separate use. After a restless night of plans thought over and rejected and again recurred to, Pleasance shaped out a future from her sense of desperation. She had speculated on the possibility of giving to the world—her small world—the idea of her death. She would leave something to identify itself as having belonged to her on the edge of the cliff, and disappear from her life without dying. She was resolved to suffer as she had done no longer; she would have no more of this deceit; she would return to the hut on the cliff, and if any of the population who had known her in former years were still there, she would say, "I am Pleasance Fern. I stole Mr. Pike's purse, and was for three weeks in Bodmin jail." They would try faintly to remember, with feeble curiosity, and answer, "Yes; sure," and offer her a drink of cider, if they had any, or a bit of potato-pasty.

The sin so hardly judged of by ladies and gentlemen, who had never been tortured by present pangs of hunger, nor dreaded their future approach—who could not estimate the terror of flying from a loathed persecutor, nor

the wild hope of escape given by the possession of his money—would present no subject for rigorous consideration to the easy-going folks with whom she would in future dwell. She would leave her house for Margaret and Cassilis. If they wanted one that was grander, this might easily be let. She looked round at the thought of this, and her eyes falling on the little biscuit figures she had bought for Mrs. Heathdale, she wept at all the bygone recollections connected with that true friend.

“ ‘ When fortune’s storms assail this weary head,
Oh, whither now can I for shelter go ? ’ ”

she cried, quoting the touching lines addressed by Beattie to his friend.

She must not give Margaret the idea of her death ; that dear child would be by that circumstance precluded from marrying for some weeks. Pleasance preferred that the wedding should take place at once. She would say that she was going to travel for some time ; that she would write to her occasionally. Margaret would not miss her much ; girls did not when they married. Who could Pleasance ever have missed when she had Edgar by her side ? Then the poor mother wept quietly, to think that no one would miss *her*. Sally was going to be married, and Margaret—

She was more tranquil when she had thus arranged her future in her own mind. She slept that night—the sleep of exhaustion—to awaken in the morning with every nerve refreshed for fresh suffering; like the Indian who sleeps in the interval of torture; but determined to carry out the intentions she had formed on the preceding day. There would be between twenty and thirty pounds yearly after Margaret's income was paid to her. That might accumulate; she had money enough—the gift of her dying friend—to keep her for the few years she should have to live.

She wished she had been brought up as a Catholic: then she might have found a sanctuary of repose, and have been dead to the world and considered dead by it, and no longer a disgrace to her child. She looked round at the home endeared to her by long years, and thought with a revulsion of feeling, of the lone cottage on the side of the cliff. She thought of its loneliness, of the eerie voices which had seemed to come on the beach; of her grandmother's form as it lay on the truckle-bed. That dreary spot must in future be her home; far from all the comforts and refinements of life. "Terrors pursue me as the wind; my welfare passes away like a cloud," she sighed.

Then another dread pursued her. Margaret would hear, ultimately, of her crime and its punishment. She was sure to have that fatal information forced on her at one time or another. There is no pity in the world. And Pleasance repeated the lines never so acutely sympathized with, as when calumny is writhed under, either true or false—

“Teach me to feel another’s woe,
To hide the fault I see ;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.”

Margaret, from whose unsullied mind, Pleasance had hitherto kept as far as possible the knowledge of sin, must learn that her mother had suffered the penalty of crime.

“But my child shall know *all* the truth before we pass away from each other’s ken. I will tell her myself ; no one but the criminal can state the temptations that goaded to crime. She will hear of the punishment. She shall know the cause.”

“Margaret !” she wrote ; “your dear face will flush with shame as you read this confession. Let this plead for me—your miserable mother—that your father, the noblest-hearted youth who ever trod the deck of a man-of-war, knew all, and yet thought me

worthy of being his wife. But he had a man's strength of mind, a man's position, to shelter the weak and to defy the strong ; to form his own judgment, and having done that, to defy that of the world. You are a girl, my daughter, and must bow to the opinion of the world. The decision of that world is right in the main. It may press hard on individuals, but it must be succumbed to.

“ I was a very untaught and ignorant girl of fifteen when I first knew your father ; we loved each other dearly. You will understand that, for you love Cassilis. I was said to be beautiful ; I suppose I was so, but, if it were, it comes to me only as a dream to account for after circumstances. I was persecuted by the manager of the mine to become his mistress. Your father was gone ; he did not return. I knew not why he remained absent ; but I watched and waited—oh, so long ! I used to stay on the beach after I was turned off the mine, looking out for the boat which I could not see. Mr. Pike thought he would starve me into compliance. He came to me one evening on the beach ; I climbed up the side of the cliff to get out of the way. He offered me a purse with gold and silver shining through it, and, finding that I refused it, he

flung a small fragment of rock at me. I got away out of his reach ; but, in flinging the stone, he must have jerked the purse out of his pocket.

“ It lay glistening on the sand in the morning sun ; it gave me the means of escape. I had remained all night on the beach, fearing to come again within his reach. I saw in it the means of escaping him altogether. I thought I would go away and get into service, where he could never find me. I was overtaken, and asked by the magistrates if I knew that the purse belonged to Mr. Pike. I said, ‘ Yes. I had seen it in his hand.’ I was condemned to a fortnight’s imprisonment. I knew nothing more, except that I was sent to the infirmary with fever and blistered feet ; I was there three weeks. I told your father all, and he held his arm round me tighter, and married me. I was glad then : I am sorry now—sorry for your sake, my Margaret, whom I must never again call mine. You will be happy, my dear one ! for your youth was nurtured under more prosperous circumstances than that of your unhappy mother. If you are inclined to judge me harshly, remember that the purity of mind that gives the decision against me has been nurtured

and corroborated in its principles by myself. I have put the knife in the hand of her who must sever the tie between us.

"Your future mother-in-law has told me that this severance must take place. I thought the letter cruel, but I admit its justice, and bow to its decision. And now, farewell, my darling child! My last thought will be of you, and will be a prayer for your welfare. Do not think that I contemplate self-destruction. I should never, in my senses, do that, which the great Unseen Power which rules all things might punish in the shadowy realm of death by separation from your father.

"Do not grieve for me: grief comes soon enough, even to those who are prosperous. Do not think I shall want the money I have settled on you and Cassilis; I shall have enough to keep me as long as I live.

"Your affectionate mother,

"PLEASANCE PETREL.

"P.S.—Give my love to my future son-in-law, if he choose to accept it."

Pleasance felt easier when the letter was written, but she did not send it. She placed it within a book on the table, and waited, she scarcely knew for what. Then she wrote

again to the lawyers, and begged them to send the settlement to Mrs. Tyrie; and she addressed a short note to Margaret, to ask her whether Mr. Tyrie would consent to become her trustee. Then, having arranged as she best could for the happiness of her child, she packed up a few articles to take with her in her flight. She used the word in her mind, and then laughed feebly, thinking that could not be a flight where there was no pursuit.

"The wicked fleeth, and no man pursueth," she said, with a quiet consideration of the facts.

She did not suppose any search would be made for her. She could elude any by going through London, that labyrinth through which it is so difficult to find a clue.

She told Louisa that Miss Petrel was going to be married, and would come down there, probably. She was going to London. Louisa must be prepared for the return of her young mistress at any hour. Then she took her small portmanteau in a cab to the station. She asked the porter to take her a ticket to London, and bade adieu to the place where she had spent many happy years, now lost to her for ever.

"Mother!" cried Cassilis, rushing into the

boudoir, where Mrs. Seaward was about to take a luxurious breakfast.

Mrs. Seaward was self-indulgent: she liked to have things comfortable, as she called it. Everything about her was well cared for. Purity was her idol, and it was carried even to the dusting of her room, and the whiteness of her damask table linen. An iron mould on it would have been considered an abomination equally with any dust sprinkling the skirting board. No dog ever fawned on the knee of this lady; there might be the mark of his paw. Dogs knew there was nothing but repulsion in those pale blue eyes. No robin ever hopped on her window sill, when the air was spiked with frost, to beg for crumbs; crumbs made a litter; litter was intolerable to a person of tidy habits, like Mrs. Seaward. The amount of sympathy likely to be felt towards the failings of others, might be correctly estimated by spending a few hours in the mansion of Mrs. Seaward. She had no more pity than the skies during a hard frost.

"Mother!" cried her son, again, forgetting the axiom of Solomon, "He who calleth his friend in the morning with a loud voice it shall be counted unto him as a curse." "Mo-

ther, it was too late to speak to you last night; I did not get home till half-past ten."

"It wanted twenty minutes to eleven. I wonder that, knowing the rules of this house, you were not at home by prayer time. You know I always require you to show proper respect to the decencies of life."

"My dear mother, have a little consideration. A man is only engaged once in his life."

"I do not know how that may be, he is only married once."

"Pray do not be so scrupulous in your criticisms."

"It seems to me," said the lady, "that scruples are the best safeguards we have in the path of right."

Cassilis made a little impatient hit with his hand, which held a riding whip, the lash of which touched a spoon which reposed in a half empty egg shell, and upset the contents. "I am very sorry," said the young man.

"All men are clumsy," replied the lady; "for that reason I prefer to breakfast alone."

Cassilis thought it best to go on, though the time was unpropitious.

"Mrs. Petrel sent a message to Margaret that she assented to your wishes, and would carry out all that you require to the best of her ability."

The plump face of Mrs. Seaward grew sullen with a sense of being baffled.

"Did you see the letter?" asked the mother, moodily.

"Yes," he replied.

She had expected, from the kind of woman whom she believed Pleasance to be, that she should receive in return an answer of vulgar abuse; nor did she think it likely that she would be able to settle five hundred pounds yearly on her daughter. She had trusted to this to break off the match, and here was Cassilis disturbing her breakfast and upsetting, in his rapture, a half-eaten egg, which she should have enjoyed if left to herself.

"It was rather indelicate in Miss Petrel to show her mother's letter."

"I do not see that, had she shown me the whole of it; as it was, the part revealed was only the message, which Margaret seemed to wish I should repeat accurately."

"I should like to see it myself," said the lady.

"I have no doubt," replied her son, "that she will trust me with it. But that brings me to my request: I wish you would ask Miss Petrel to spend a few days here."

There was a discouraging silence. Cassilis went on—

“It is not unnatural,” he said, in a pleading tone, “that I should wish the two persons I love best in the world to be better able to appreciate the admirable qualities of each.”

This remark was offensive to the motherly feelings of Mrs. Seaward. It placed the affection of Cassilis for her and for Miss Petrel on the same platform.

“He has seen this trumpery girl only for a few weeks, and I have loved him for twenty-four years ; yet he makes us even.”

It is certain that Pleasance, though she lost all in consequence, had more toleration for her daughter’s love for Cassilis than Mrs. Seaward had for her son’s attachment to Margaret. It is a difference in the sexes. The mother tolerates the son-in-law; to the mother the daughter-in-law is, as a rule, intolerable.

Mrs. Seaward also did not choose her own admirable qualities to be put into the same category as those of Miss Petrel. Yet she could think of no good reason for refusing her son’s request—indeed, of no reason at all.

“Yes, she may come,” she said, taking another egg. “Do keep that whip quiet,

Cassilis; you make me nervous. I hope she will not think it necessary to bring a lady's-maid. It is very unpleasant to have strange women about the house. Their tongues are ever clacking about their mistresses. I should not like *my* servants to be enlightened about the household of my future daughter-in-law."

"I don't suppose Margaret will require to bring a lady's-maid. I suppose Wilson could do anything she may require?"

"Exactly," replied the mother.

"When would it suit you and my father to receive Margaret?"

"From Tuesday till Saturday?" said his mother, interrogatively.

Cassilis expected an invitation for a fortnight at least, and looked rather blank, but assented. It would have been imprudent to press for the prolongation of a visit so evidently unwelcome. Cassilis, with the sanguine nature of a lover, believed that when his mother was better acquainted with the beautiful Margaret, she would become warmly attached to her future daughter-in-law.

"Auntie, dear!" cried Margaret, on the evening of the day when Cassilis had so untowardly greeted his mother in the morning,

"Mrs. Seaward has asked me to stay at Abbotsland from Tuesday till Saturday."

"Indeed! she is determined not to have too much of you," replied Mrs. Tyrie, somewhat spitefully.

"So it seemed to me, and I want you to say that you have an engagement for me on Thursday evening, so that I need not remain there more than two nights."

"Certainly; I will ask Mr. Franklin to come and have a little music on Thursday evening, and I shall *not* ask Mr. Forrester—so there! To have two engaged people in a small party is as bad as two antagonists over a chess-board, only that in the last case the folks are simply nonentities to the rest of the party; the others are absurdities. It is difficult for the most graceful and unconscious of women to look to advantage when she knows that every movement is followed by a pair of adoring eyes."

"Very well, my aunt; having had the company of Cassilis for two days, I think we can bear the separation for a few hours. I had rather not go at all; but Cassilis believes that I shall find his mother the most charming and perfect creature in the world if I did but know her; so I suppose I am bound *

to take a position for a favourable inspection."

"Did your mother write to Mrs. Seaward?"

"No; she sent her a message by me."

"That was strange."

"Was it? It did not seem so, as mamma said she assented to all Mrs. Seaward's propositions."

"What were they?"

"Indeed I have not the smallest idea; about settlements, and such stupid things, I dare say."

"Margaret, I should not wonder if Mrs. Seaward made herself very unpleasant about your mother."

"She had better not!" replied the girl, with flashing eyes. "But why should she?"

There was a pause of hesitation on the part of Mrs. Tyrie. Then she said—

"Your father married beneath him in rank—a poor girl."

"A *poor* girl!" replied Margaret. "Some people think every perfection is comprised in wealth, and every crime in the absence of it. Has the pearl less brightness because of its birth? Has the violet less sweetness for springing from earth?"

"No, I dare say not; but as regards the

first part of your speech, 'some people' are generally right, for wealth takes away temptation. However, my dear child, I may be mistaken, and Mrs. Seaward may not intend to be disagreeable; but remember that Mrs. Petrel is your mother, and has been an excellent one to you, my dear."

"Good heavens! Mrs. Tyrie, why should you think it necessary to remind me of what both duty and affection would suggest?"

"Because," replied Aunt Mary, "when a woman has a son he will be influenced by her, consciously or unconsciously, all his life; but when she has a daughter who falls in love, that daughter will be influenced by her lover to the exclusion of her mother, and by his mother through him. That is a hard saying, but experience will prove it to be a true one."

"If that is to be so, I had rather not marry," said Margaret.

"Or marry a man who has no living mother. Even then you will not escape some remembered wise saws and modern instances. So your safest way would be to select a husband who had been early orphaned."

Margaret was disturbed at the innuendoes of her aunt. She, however, did not believe them thoroughly, though they gave her a

vague feeling of uneasiness. She began to consider that her mother had never spoken of any relative excepting a dead grandmother—had never mentioned where she had lived, or where she was buried.

The doubt passing through her mind, instead of depressing her, made her feel aggressive. She was conscious of the possession of beauty and talent well cultivated, and she did not mean to be snubbed and apologized over, as it were, in the family of her future husband, but worshipped by her lover, and respected by those who could not be expected to share his enthusiasm about her.

Cassilis called the day before the proposed visit, and awkwardly enough suggested that Sally should not accompany her young mistress to Abbotsland. His mother, he stated, had a great objection to ladies'-maids.

"Then I suppose she does not keep one herself," said Margaret, who really did not in the least care for the services of a maid.

"I should have said strange ladies'-maids; she has the same objection to them as to strange cats."

"I only desire to retain Sally, who wishes to return home that she may be my companion when I go thither," observed Margaret.

“I trust that you will ere long have the escort of your husband,” replied Cassilis, proudly; and the girl smiled gladly and beautifully, consenting to leave Sally to follow her own devices.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ Oh ! Memory, thou fond deceiver !
Still importunate and vain ;
To former joys recurring ever,
Turning all the past to pain ;
Thou, like the world, the oppressed oppressing,
Thy smiles increase the wretch’s woe.”

PLEASANCE arrived at her destination without accident. The gift of a shilling to porters now and then provided her with information how to act so as to arrive safely at her old locality. It was little altered in the seventeen years that had elapsed since she had left it. The mine had naturally, from its increased depth, become more expensive to work, and the shareholders had ceased to work it, and there were fewer signs of prosperity at Wheal Constance than formerly.

She left her portmanteau at the public-house. She recognized the man who kept it, but he saw no resemblance in the careworn

face in shabby black to the beautiful Pleasance Fern, who compelled the homage of the gazer to her excessive loveliness.

Her first visit was to the hut. She found it as she expected, dilapidated, but still standing niched in the cliff. The worthless bed yet remained untouched where her grandmother had died. The clothes were rotted, but they had not been displaced. Pleasance thought she would have the corner of the hut repaired, and a fresh bed brought to it for herself. That was her home. She might be thankful that no one would dispute its possession with her—"My dower-house," she said, with a smile.

Then she thought of her old friend who had nursed her grandmother; she would go and see her. It gave Pleasance a movement of pleasure that there was some one whom she knew. She went to the cottage. Mrs. Sibley was washing potatoes, previous to boiling them for supper. Pleasance came and stood at the door for an instant, unnoticed; she leaned against the door-post, for her heart beat with uncomfortable rapidity. She threw a shadow over the cottager's downcast head, who looked up to see the cause. Pleasance saw seventeen years of added wrinkles in the careworn face.

"You seem sadly, mistress," said the woman, looking at the pale face and quivering lip of her visitor ; "will you please to take a seat?" and she dusted a wooden chair and placed it for her guest. Presently she began to talk. "You are a stranger, I see?"

"Yes," said Pleasance. "Yes" in the west country stands for "why," very frequently.

"We do not often see any but our own folks here. It is a God-forgotten place."

"You seem pretty comfortable," suggested Pleasance.

"Yes ; I don't complain. My old man is in the churchyard. He was a difficult one to deal with so long as he continued. My children are grown up : the gals in service, the boys underground at Wheal Hewers. I got the girls out as soon as I could, not to let them be at the mine."

"I hope they have done well?"

"Yes ; I hear no complaints."

"Who is manager of Wheal Hewers now?" asked Pleasance.

"A son of the old Pike. He don't take a bit after his father. He don't know if a girl is good to look at or bad ; so long as they do their work——"

"That is best," said Pleasance.

"Yes ; you see he's a Methody."

"What has become of old Mr. Pike?"

"Oh ! he has turned silly. Had a stroke, they say ; maybe two or three for what I know. He was a regular bad one, and his son don't know what to do with all the strap-ping fellows who say they are his brothers, on the wrong side of the blanket. They do say that he made way with a girl, Pleasance Fern, that would not have anything to say to him. Leastways, she was nowhere to be found, and nobody saw how she went, unless she was flung into the water from the top of the cliff, where she lived. She brought back the black frock I lent her, poor thing ! after the burying of her grandmother, and I never saw her again. She might have gone away with the manager ; but we should have heard tell of it if she had. There was many a spying on him and his doings."

"Did you make any inquiries ?"

"Well, I asked at the shop and the meeting, and I went to the hut ; but, bless you ! it seemed so whisht that I came away again. I ran up in the evening, and I thought that the old woman sat up in the bed looking at me. It might have been fancy ; but it *skeart* me so that I never went again."

"I have heard tell of Pleasance Fern," said Pleasance, unconsciously falling back into the tone and phraseology of her companion ; "they say she was in Bodmin jail, for stealing a purse from Mr. Pike."

"Very like! very like!" replied the old woman. "She wanted it a deal more than he did." That was sufficient excuse in the mind of the cottager.

Pleasance, in the acquired morality of seventeen years, suggested that if Pleasance Fern stole the purse, it was right that she should be punished. "Poor girl!" said Mrs. Sibley ; "she and her grandmother often wanted a bit of potato ; and they had nothing better at the best of times than a piece of dry bread."

"That is true !" said Pleasance.

"Folks that are better off don't know—and don't care—what poor folks suffer," said Mrs. Sibley, aggressively, looking at the gown of her visitor, which, though very shabby, showed the texture of a better material than that worn on Wheal Constance.

It had been the thought of Pleasance to say that she was the person whose crime they were discussing ; but she stopped, arrested by the consideration that numberless questions

would follow, which might connect her with Margaret and with her deceased friend, and sully them with the disgrace of her offence. So she answered, that she had had trouble herself, and had felt poverty, and could feel for those who were "in trouble," or had been so. Then she got up to go; but her old acquaintance, who liked her better for her last speech, begged her to stay and eat some supper with her. "After seeing children pulling, and tearing, and ready to eat one alive for some supper, it seems lonesome to have the potatoes all to one's self," said the woman.

"Your sons?" asked Pleasance.

"They be down the mine," and won't come up till six o'clock to-morrow morning—'tis a good bit off from here—so take off your bonnet and fall to."

Pleasance obeyed, and revealed her beautiful hair, in its wealth of natural ripples, streaked here and there with silver lines, yet so few that they did not interfere with the richness of its colour. The woman looked at her curiously. "Thee art not unlike the gal Fern theeself," she said.

"Let bygones be bygones, neighbour. Pleasance Fern has not forgotten that Mrs.

Sibley was her only friend seventeen years ago."

"Where did thee go?"

"I went away with a sea-faring man. He is dead now. No one cares for me; so I came back to the old mine."

"Not to look for work?"

"No, neighbour; I have just enough to keep me alive without. But I've brought a little present for you," and Pleasance put down a half sovereign; "so say nothing about the poor lone woman who has come back to her old nest to live and die."

"No, no, gal; least said is soonest mended. I shall hold my tongue; but will you like a bed here till you have settled yourself—there is room now, so many of them gone?" But Pleasance longed for the power of being quite alone, and told her old friend that she had hired a bedchamber at the public-house.

When the night came, she went down to the beach and sat on the fragment of rock from whence she had used to watch for Edgar. She covered her face with her hands, and listened to the ever-recurring roar of the breaking waves and the hiss when they retired; and could almost believe that she was still the anxious girl awaiting her lover.

But terrible as had been the suspense then, the very fact of suspense meant a glimmer of hope. Then there was a possibility of future happiness, however dim and remote. There had been sorrow then and apprehension, now there was nothing to fear, nothing to hope ; Edgar's bones were lying in the quiet depths, and his solitary widow yearned to share his rest. There was the projecting fragment of rock where the fishermen had been counting their spoil with a careful iteration, which had driven her overwrought brain almost to madness. There was the heap of stones by which she had climbed up the side of the cliff when Mr. Pike tried to follow her and slipped back by his own weight. Both were gone, the beloved one and the oppressor. She had possessed a precious treasure in Margaret, but that was to be relinquished. She tried to think it was best that it should be so. Her daughter was about to marry a man she loved, and she would be as happy as youth, beauty, talent, good conduct, and competence in the present, and wealth in the future, could make her. It might have pleased Providence to remove Margaret from her mother's longing clasp by death, instead of by love. No ; she had no ground of complaint. But, oh ! it was

terrible to her! She had lived but a short time with Edgar, and, dearly as she loved him, he was not knitted into her life as Margaret had been, from the first moment when she had been given to the yearning arms of her poor mother, till that morning when she had left her for ever, as it now appeared.

The light seemed to have left her life now that Margaret was gone. Only a woman, only a daughter, can be thus idolized by a mother's heart. If she be sympathetic, she may enter into the manly and ennobling ambition of her sons—she may feel with them and for them, both in their sports and in the serious battles of their lives, but these things are distinct from her own existence. Her daughter makes her mother's days more sweet to her from dawn to night, from night to dawn. She sees the mind opening like a flower, and becoming more beautiful as more expanded—she sees her own perceptions quickened and intensified frequently in the stronger intellect of her child. By degrees, she who has been clung to, and has given strength and support, clings herself to the healthy mind she has helped to form. She craves the happiness she supplied before. Miserable is the mother, from whom death or inevitable circumstances

severs the creature on whom her happiness depends. The daughter may ripen into beauty, or fade from maturity; but, to the mother, her child's face and figure is always perfection. Then there are little consultations about ribbons, laces, and general adornments, interesting to feminine minds—doubly interesting to a mother, who loves to see her idol transfigured into new phases of beauty, by the aid of skilled artificers of wonderful raiments of needlework.

“Blest with that charm, the certainty to please,” the daughter dwells on every little incident in narrating the occupations of her short walks when she returns, confiding in perfect trust in the sympathy she will receive. Such intercourse had existed between Pleasance and Margaret, and from this the sad mother must now in the future be debarred.

Pleasance hired help to clear away the old furniture from the hut in the cliff, and had a mason to repair the roof, which the wind had denuded. Then she had some common articles of furniture placed in the two rooms. It was an occupation of her mind for the day which it took to complete it. Then, for the first time for seventeen years, she slept under a lonely roof tree.

She had not calculated on the suffering produced by the change of long habit. The roar of the never silent sea—the blast of the wind, which swept over the solitary cabin, and the consciousness that no human creature was within hearing, added to her mental and bodily depression. When morning came, she cared not to light the fire to make any tea for her breakfast; she should have to fetch water from the spring in the valley. Luckily there was the natural bath at the foot of the cliff, where the soft yellow sand shone under the water, which was the colour of the chrysoprase. There, with a towel, her toilette was soon made. At one o'clock she would go and share Mrs. Sibley's potatoes. Threepence, she imagined, would pay for them, and allow her friend something over for fuel and the trouble of boiling them. The cottager said nothing of the return of Pleasance. She felt that ten shillings was a good repayment for holding her tongue, besides which, Pleasance Fern had died out as an object of interest in that lone village.

No one had cared to inhabit the deserted cottage in the cliff; in places where population was more crowded it would have been seized upon as soon as it was found empty;

but there were many untenanted cottages in the village since the working of the mine had been given up. There were no longer strings of mules laden with ore; *moyles* Pleasance had been wont to call them in common with her associates. There were no groups of girls sitting in the shadows at the midday hour devouring potato pasties. The roses which the clerk had placed outside the counting-house, had grown up as only west country roses do grow, and having flaunted over the closed windows, drooped from the unsympathetic slates of the roof, no one caring to appropriate their sweets.

Pleasance, who had a vein of poetry in her composition, felt that the deserted mine was in accord with her own life, and—

“For man’s neglect she loved it more.”

* * * * *

On the appointed day Mrs. Tyrie’s carriage took Margaret to Abbotsland. Her impatience was not great, so she arrived just in time to dress for dinner. Margaret declined the proposition that the lady’s-maid should unpack her clothes, and said she would ring when she required her services to fasten her dress.

“Dear me, miss! you will give me a little

time to dress your hair: if you will excuse me, it is so very countryfied. You would look so very much more stylish with it dressed high on the top of your head."

"Like yours, perhaps?" said Margaret, looking superciliously at the bundles of frisettes, over which the lady's-maid's tresses were drawn, with the untidiness inseparable from all hair turned the wrong way, when

"Gums and pomatum do not its course restrain."

"Thank you, I prefer my own style."

The maid replied not, but she had a grievance which she carried at once to the eager ears of her mistress, whose bell rang at that moment. Mrs. Seaward fancied that Wilson was occupied in assisting Margaret, and had determined to spare her services for as short a time as possible, thinking that she might thus embarrass her future daughter-in-law.

"I only stayed a minute with Miss Petrel, ma'am, to offer to do her hair for her more like a Christian; but she seemed quite touchy about it."

Mrs. Seaward said nothing, but put the observation away to be acted on.

When Margaret entered the drawing-room, she found the sisters, Mrs. Petrel and Mrs. Seaward, seated in expectation of her approach.

In the face of Mrs. Petrel the eyes were grey and placed too near each other, with a hooked nose between them, the lips were thin and compressed. Mrs. Seaward had a turned-up nose and a projecting chin. Her skin was delicate and her complexion good. Now and then Margaret detected a likeness between her face and that of Cassilis, which gave her somewhat of a distaste to that of her lover. If you wish to impress your beloved favourably, do not show yourself with your relatives if they in any way resemble you; some look, some trick of the countenance is identical in both, and the result is disastrous.

Margaret sometimes saw Mrs. Seaward observing her from under her fair eyebrows and light eyelashes, with an expression so malign that the young lady was convinced that, though the mother of Cassilis had consented to accept her as a daughter-in-law, she should have much to contend against before she won any real affection from her husband's mother. The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Seaward, Mr. and Mrs. Petrel, Cassilis and herself. Cassilis looked round on his mother with an expression of proud satisfaction as Margaret entered the room, simply dressed in white muslin, and with only the ornament which

her uncle had given her round her neck ; her hair, which was black like that of her father, had the natural ripple of her mother's hair, and it was parted on the brow, and carried to the back of the head, whence it fell in curls from the centre of a rich braid.

She always felt attracted towards her grandfather, and was disposed to like Mr. Seaward. Both these gentlemen regarded her with the approbation usually accorded by the opposite sex to "a pretty woman whom they liked to see."

Soup and fish are inestimable, except to pretty young ladies who do not care for either, and are not hungry. Margaret, after her substantial luncheon with her aunt, would have preferred a cup of tea with a book, to the penalty of sitting up in a stiff white muslin, to be as happy as two pair of malign eyes would permit. The two elder men talked about a case of poaching which interested them both, for both were keen sportsmen. Cassilis felt awkward ; he was not yet in possession of coverts, and could not persuade himself that he cared to shoot unfortunate birds, which he had to kill very frequently after he had winged them. It was disagreeable work, he thought, and ought

to be kept for gamekeepers, park-rangers, and butchers. Probably when he inherited Abbotsland, his interest might be keener.

In the meantime the sisters talked of the appearances made by several noted beauties at the Abbotsland ball just passed. The palm was given by Mrs. Seaward first to the Honourable Miss Brune, and by Mrs. Petrel to a Lady Ernest Baliol. As the two Margarets had been beyond doubt the most beautiful women in the room, Cassilis felt that his Margaret was excepted, on the score of being "present company," and that the other's claims were disposed of by two lines of Haynes Bayley's song—

"Oh, no ! we never mention her,
Her name is never heard."

Mrs. Seaward admitted that Lady Ernest Baliol might have been the handsomer but for the outrage on fashion and good taste which she showed in the arrangement of her hair.

"I thought her hair both fine and abundant," observed Cassilis. "I saw nothing wrong in it."

"My dear Cassilis," said Mrs. Seaward, sententiously, "when a woman, especially an unmarried woman, runs counter to the usages of society on the outside of her head, depend

upon it there is something not right in the inside."

Margaret listened, and understood that the lady's-maid had been telling tales, and saw that an attack was made on her Grecian head-dress. She felt herself becoming like Ice Peter, in Busch's tales, a bundle of cold aggressive spikes. She spoke more deliberately than usual. "The high head-dresses now worn necessitate, I believe, a large amount of artificial aid. They are convenient, no doubt, to ladies whose natural covering is deficient, or who require added height."

Mrs. Seaward was "a dumpy woman," and her hair was dressed by her maid in imitation of her own; that is to say, it was supplemented by false hair and *frisettes*. She flushed unpleasantly at the composure of the young lady, whom she meant to put out of countenance, and recognised the fact that she had "caught a Tartar." Being more than usually irritated, she descended to direct personalities. "You would look much better yourself if you had your head dressed like other people, Miss Petrel. It never answers for young persons to affect singularity in anything."

Margaret smiled sweetly, and reared her stately little head.

"What do you say, Cassilis?" continued his mother; "do you not think Miss Petrel would look better with the hair cut short and curled over the forehead?"

If Margaret expected the lover-like response that he desired no change, she was disappointed. He saw something was wrong between the ladies, but had not "the word of the enigma," as the French say, as he had not known of the lady's-maid's suggestion. His love for his mother was great, his respect for her opinion unbounded. "I think I should like to see it dressed in that way, and I should then be better able to decide," he said, hurriedly.

"I fear," replied Margaret, "you will be unable to relieve yourself from any perplexity you may feel on the subject. I wear my hair as it is to please the person I love best in the world, my mother, and unless she expresses any wish on the subject, I shall continue to do so."

There was a dead silence on this announcement, uttered in a clear, composed, young voice.

The good-natured selfish grandfather, who had no objection to her "fluttering the Volscians," nodded across to Margaret, saying, "That is right, my dear, stick up for yourself, you save your friends the trouble."

"About friends," replied Margaret, at boiling heat, but still with outward calm, "I never had but one besides my mother—my godmother, Mrs. Heathdale—a course of uninterrupted kindness for sixteen years would have given, had she lived, a permission for interference, which nothing but that, or the closest relationship can give. There is a proverb about relations which I will not quote, my dear grandpapa," she continued, "but I will make my Aunt Mary an exception to it."

Mr. Seaward smiled grimly. "My old acquaintance has caught it now," he thought, "as well as Clarinda. Foolish woman! to attack a girl when 'Scorn and disdain ride sparkling in her eyes.' That young sprig, my stepson, will find that he has the worst of it if he marries her. I doubt whether *she* will marry *him*. I see that she will never give up her mother, and I don't blame her."

These were the thoughts flitting through the mind of the master of the house. He did not show them in his manner, but turned the conversation skilfully to the diseases of grouse, and the small supply he had as yet received from the moors; thus Margaret's head was allowed to recover as it best might from the attack

made on the exterior of it, but the feeling that Cassilis had not stood up for her against his mother made her so angry, that she avoided his eyes during the whole of dinner, and only answered in monosyllables when he addressed her.

It was a relief to all parties when Mrs. Seaward gave the signal to her sister, and led the way, followed by Mrs. Petrel and Margaret. The look sought for by Cassilis, as his lady-love passed him when he held open the door was not given, and the young man saw that he would not have a meek person at the head of his household if Margaret were to reign there. Margaret was to be snubbed when she got to the drawing-room, which was on the ground floor. The sisters drew themselves together in the recess made by one of the windows, and began to talk in a low voice without seemingly regarding the young girl. The feeling that she was not treated with the politeness due to a stranger, nor the kindness to which her connection with one sister, and her proposed relationship with the other entitled her, determined her to amuse herself in her own way, and stepped out on the gravel path through rose-loaded flower-beds, and disappeared into the grounds.

CHAPTER XIX.

“Alas ! how slight a cause will move
Contentions between hearts that love.”

MARGARET's heart swelled with a sense of insult ; she would not remain there till the time originally proposed, but would write for her aunt's carriage to fetch her early to-morrow. Then she doubted whether she had not given way to anger too excessive for the occasion. She could not, she supposed, expect to find the love and the indulgence she received from her mother, and had been in the habit of obtaining from Mrs. Heathdale. Then she remembered how differently her Aunt Mary had treated her, and her indignation rose again. Then she congratulated herself on her own penetration. “I told mamma in my letter that she,” *i.e.* Mrs. Seaward, “was the

most disagreeable person I ever saw. What business had she to attack my head?"

The result of all her cogitation was that Cassilis must mend his manners if she were to be expected to marry him. Thus resolving things, she walked on into a plantation, and lost her way. The last rays of sunshine shed their red glory on the trunks of the trees, and the quietness of the scene allayed the fever of her spirits.

She got further into the plantation; for though she was becoming more forgiving towards every one, she was seized by a dread that Cassilis, hearing from his mother and aunt that she had walked out, would pursue her, and bring her back like a naughty child, amidst the suppressed smiles of the party in the drawing-room. If she could find another entrance she would go back by it, and escape any meeting with her lover. Presently she heard a gate slam, and then horse's footsteps at a walk, so she guessed she should come to the goal of her wishes in a few minutes. A moss-grown gate showed how to leave the plantation, and, as she hastened to avail herself of it, she came on a horseman, who reined up his steed with an exclamation of surprise.

"Miss Petrel! is it possible!" he exclaimed,

with surprise. "I do not know, however, why I should be wonder-stricken to find you here, under the circumstances."

He jumped off his horse and led it, walking by Margaret's side.

"I ought not to be surprised at your being here, but I did not expect to find you walking alone. How is this?"

"It is," said Margaret, smiling, "because I am in a very bad temper. After that, will you venture to escort me to the house?"

"Yes, if you confess your sins; and then my doing so will stand in the place of absolution."

"To begin at the beginning. You know I am engaged to Cassilis Forrester."

Lord Lorimer bowed gravely.

"I beg to offer my congratulations."

"I was invited here for a few days—nominally, to make the acquaintance of his mother; really, I suspect, as a servant is taken on trial, to see whether she will 'do.' When I was dressing, the lady's-maid wished to alter the style of my hair. I told her to mind her mistress's business, or something equally polite. At dinner Mrs. Seaward followed on the same side, and Cassilis had the atrocity to agree with her. Of course I was furious.

When we got into the drawing-room, the sisters, Mrs. Petrel and Mrs. Seaward, sat down with their heads together, and began to whisper. Not to put them to that inconvenience I walked out on the lawn towards a plantation, lost my way, made for the sound of horses' hoofs, and here I am. Now, do you not consider that I was most infamously treated?"

"Indeed I do," replied Lord Lorimer; "but with 'so charming a spirit,' as Richardson says of Lady G——, I have no fear for your future happiness. You will manage the mother, pinch the aunt, and downstairs in a whirlwind vanish."

"I might do that *now*," said the young lady; "but after I have vowed the three vows, it might not be dutiful."

"Then you had better consider well before you vow. Cassilis Forrester is a very good young man. I think you are playing a safe card in marrying him. Does your mother, Mrs. Petrel, approve of him?"

"Oh! she would approve of anything I wish. Poor dear mamma! how angry she would be to think how uncivil they are. Are you expected at Abbotsland?"

"No; I wanted to consult Mr. Seaward

about a purchase of land I am going to make, and the tiresome owner is so unreasonable as to press for an answer. I am sufficiently known here to expect a bed, without having given notice of my coming."

They had reached the hall-door, when Lord Lorimer rang, and, bowing to Margaret, said that he preferred putting his horse himself into the stable, to ensure his having a good bed, by a little pressure on the groom. This he said to avoid the awkwardness for Miss Petrel of their having been seen together by the footman. Margaret gave him full credit for his tenderness to his horse, but none for his consideration of her; for not being conscious of evil, she never anticipated being suspected of it.

When she entered the drawing-room, Cassilis came forward to meet her, saying—

"Where can you have been?"

"Mrs. Seaward and Mrs. Petrel were engaged in confidential conversation," said the young lady; "so, fearful of incommoding them, I had a very pleasant stroll through some charming fir plantations."

"Take some coffee after your evening ramble, my dear!" said Mr. Petrel, good-naturedly, who never bore malice to any one but his wife.

Margaret took the coffee, glad of an occupation, and shortly afterwards Lord Lorimer was announced by the footman as being in the library, and requesting an interview with the master of the house.

When the clatter of the tea and coffee cups had ceased, Cassilis asked Margaret if she would give them some music. She declined, feeling that, if her performance was desired, Mrs. Seaward should ask her.

That lady, having heard her refuse Cassilis a second time, imagined that she was conscious of being an indifferent performer, and forthwith, with greater civility than she had yet shown, she said she hoped Miss Petrel would favour them.

She was rather taken aback when Margaret answered "Certainly" in a very composed voice, and, sitting down, she burst into "Ciascun lo dice," from "La Figlia del Reggimento." She knew that her voice was magnificent, and that she had been well taught by an Italian master; and had the audience been a hundred persons she would have sung with equal indifference.

The ladies heard the song in profound silence; not a word of praise did they give at its conclusion. At last Mrs. Seaward burst

into raptures—not at Margaret's singing the song, but at the recollection of Jenny Lind's performance of the same bravura.

Mrs. Petrel observed that the young lady had a powerful voice. "It was a pity it had not been better trained," she said, in an audible whisper to her sister.

Mr. Petrel said—"Your singing is magnificent, my dear."

Observed her grandfather—"Do not be put out of countenance by anything they say about it." Then, putting up his hand in imitation of the audible whisper of his wife, he added—"They are both as jealous as cats."

Margaret laughed, and suggested that Mr. Forrester had better sing something now.

She did not call him Cassilis, he observed.

He sang "Deck not with gems;" and when it was concluded Mrs. Petrel asked for "Father, we call on thee."

Before this was completed, Lord Lorimer entered the room, apologizing to Mrs. Seaward for his riding-dress.

"It is the penalty you pay, madam," he said, "for having a gentleman for your husband who has the soundest judgment of any man I ever met. I came for advice, and I have obtained it."

After some coffee had been called for

Lord Lorimer, Mrs. Seaward, fearing Margaret might sing again, broke up the party, and presented Margaret with her bed-chamber candlestick. As she was leaving the room, Lord Lorimer said—

“We heard your matchless rendering of ‘Ciascun lo dice,’ Miss Petrel. Not even the thickly-serried tomes could keep out the rich sounds. I have heard Jenny Lind frequently as ‘Maria,’ but her bird-like trilling execution wanted the richness and depths of what is, in my opinion, requisite in one who was born within the hearing of sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

Margaret smiled a bright answer of thanks; and as Cassilis and the ladies left the room, Lord Lorimer remained a few minutes with his host.

“Do you know anything of the Widow Petrel?” Lord Lorimer asked; “I mean of her present address?”

“No. Why do you ask? Are you thinking of proposing to her?”

“Perhaps I might, had I any chance of being accepted,” replied his lordship, smiling; “for I consider her a very lovely and a very estimable woman. But I should as soon think of paying my addresses, as it is called,

to a vestal virgin. Why I asked, is that I called at her house, and an ignorant servant-girl said that her mistress had left home, without leaving any address; that Miss was going to be married, and the girl thought that her mistress must be gone to the wedding. Consequently I fancied she might be here, or with Mrs. Tyrie."

Mr. Seaward made a queer grimace.

"Mrs. Seaward would never permit her to come to Abbotsland. Indeed, I do not expect that this match of young Forrester's will come off on that ground. There was a ring of determination in the girl's voice to-day when she spoke of her mother that prognosticated that she would make a fight for her."

"I should have the greatest possible contempt for her if she did not," replied Lord Lorimer.

"Granted that I agree with you, you must perceive that it would be exceedingly inconvenient."

"I, at any rate, not being blest with a model wife, do not see the inconvenience. I must take that as some small consolation for my bachelor state; so good night, my Benedict, the married man."

Mrs. Wilson, the lady's-maid, came to offer to undress Margaret, and to inform her that prayers were read by her mistress every morning at nine o'clock, and that guests were expected to attend.

"I suppose Mrs. Seaward has no Jews, Turks, heretics, and infidels on her visiting list?" said Margaret, as she dismissed the maid. "It would be awkward if she had."

She recalled her, however, and asked at what hour the letters were delivered. She expected one from her mother; and the coldness with which she had been greeted at Abbotsland made her turn with tender longings to the thought of her mother—that mother from whom she had never received aught but admiration and love.

As she fell asleep, she thought that dear Cassilis, if he meant to be so good a son, would make a somewhat disagreeable husband. However, she was conscious of having lost her temper. Matters might improve on the morrow; there was certainly room for it.

She slept as soundly as sixteen can sleep, having no unpaid bills nor bitter enemies to hold their imaginary courts at her pillow.

She awoke about six, and consulted Mrs. Heathdale's watch to learn the time. "An

hour to wait for post time," she said. And as the weather was warm, she looked about for some book in the small neat shelf which adorned the room she occupied.

She found the works had been arranged with reference to their height and binding, and were all very good and very dull. So she thought it a pity to displace "Dr. Gregory's Letters to his Daughter," "Mrs. Chapone's Letters," "Mrs. West's Letters to a Young Man."

"I dare say Cassilis was dosed with those," said Margaret, smiling, "and 'Coelebs in Search of a Wife.' Ahem!" she said, "I do not suspect the wife he has found will be particularly pleasing to his mamma."

She turned the hot-water tap in the bath-room adjoining her bed-chamber, and rejoiced in the prospect of being ready by the time the letters came. The luxury of the arrangements made her independent of the housemaid.

When she was dressed, she became impatient for the arrival of the post. One always wants letters most in strange places. Those home words are necessary as the staff of life, and cannot be done without, whatever delicacies may be offered in their place.

But the minute hand pointed to a quarter past seven, and there was no approaching footstep to make her heart bound with hope. She waited in her room till she was weary, and then put on her hat and descended the stairs to get into the garden.

“‘Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds,’”

said Margaret. “Certainly rich folks have great sources of happiness at command. A poor body cannot have these solitary glooms,—these stately terraces—these delicious, well-kept beds, and velvet lawns.” She turned a corner, and the sight of five gardeners all in a row—three men and two boys—mowing the lawn, was a commentary on her speech.

Then she thought of Cassilis, and that she should be wealthy if she married him, ultimately, she supposed. The sound of the bell for prayers recalled her to the memory that there was a drawback in her happiness in the person of Mrs. Seaward.

“But I love Cassilis, and I would put up with a great deal for his sake,” she added, mentally, “and then I shall always have mamma. Oh, my dear mother! I do so long to hear from you again. It is so unlike you not to write to me.”

As she was passing through the hall to the breakfast room, she saw a bustle of departure, heard cheerful voices, and caught a glimpse of Lord Lorimer, her grandfather, and Mr. Seaward going away in a dog cart. Cassilis came back from speaking to his stepfather, and with a whisper of "good morning" to Margaret, he led her into the breakfast-room, where, with faces which expressed anything but charity, stood the two ladies waiting for the assembling of the servants for prayers.

After these had been read, Mrs Seaward hoped that Margaret had slept well: and having done that amount of civility she relapsed into silence. Cassilis, usually so glib of tongue, seemed oppressed into ungraceful silence in the presence of his mother. He was made unhappy, too, on Margaret's account, lest she should take too much butter, or drop crumbs on the table cloth, or do anything else which might offend the taste of his very particular and tyrannical mother. "Nevermind," thought the young man, "it cannot last for ever," and he thought of a lovely little cottage close to, and looking on to the park, which his mother had proposed that he should take, saying that she would help him in furnishing it. After luncheon he would walk

down there with Margaret, and show her the house.

Being a male animal he had no idea of the constant interference, which would be the result of this arrangement; nor had it been suggested to him would he have understood it, more than if expressed in Hindustani.

The well-spring of Margaret's cheerfulness was shut up before these two ladies. After breakfast Mrs. Seaward said, "we are going into the library, as this is the day on which this room has a thorough cleaning. Have you any sewing?"

"No, I have not brought any."

"It is of no consequence; I can provide you with a child's frock for the charity bazaar."

"Do you not think Miss Petrel could keep a stall, sister?" asked Jane.

Mrs. Seaward speculated before she replied.

She did not mean to have Miss Petrel, as her daughter-in-law, though she would have liked to have had her to keep a stall at a bazaar, of which she was one of the lady patronesses.

Before she replied Margaret spoke.

"I shall be happy to sew for your bazaar whilst I am here, if you will give me the materials; but I should not keep a stall."

"Why pray?" asked Mrs. Petrel.

"Because, step-grandmamma," replied Margaret, who wished to be provoking, and therefore gave her a title which made her wince, "I do not think it delicate in young ladies to imitate the manners of shop girls off the stage. When I act I prefer to imitate ladies."

"I suppose you would not refuse me if I requested you to keep a stall," said Mrs. Seaward.

Cassilis, who had not yet spoken, looked pleadingly at Margaret.

"Pardon me, madam, but I cannot suppose such a contingency when I have just expressed my disapprobation of such exhibitions."

"If I mistake not," said Mrs. Seaward, speaking very deliberately, to show that she was not losing her temper, in which attempt she failed signally—"If I mistake not, my son first made your acquaintance, Miss Petrel, when you were taking the principal part in some private theatricals. I do not see, if you make no objection to exhibiting yourself before two or three hundred people, frequently the only object of attention on the stage, what harm you can see in standing at a stall at a bazaar for the laudable support of charity."

"It seems to me, madam, that it is not the exhibition of an actress's person which is thought of, but her representation of a certain character; it is at her choice with whom she acts. At a bazaar she is compelled to press her wares on every vulgar man who chooses to chaffer with her. I may be too young, and consequently unable to form a correct judgment on the subject, but I am guided by the opinion of one who was very dear to me, and by her wishes I am governed." There was a little pause, and she continued. "Will you kindly give me some sewing to do?"

Mrs. Seaward got up ungraciously, and produced a child's frock, cut out.

"Do you know how to put it together?"

"Yes, I believe so."

Mrs. Seaward, who had been accustomed to see the other Margaret very helpless in the use of her needle, was rather astonished to see the swiftness and precision of her future daughter-in-law's work. "The woman must have brought her up to be a sempstress," she thought, and by a look exchanged with her sister she saw that a similar idea was in her head also.

"Now, Cassilis, read something whilst we work—some play of Shakespeare's."

"Very well. Had you not better let me select some which I may prefer?" said Cassilis, who did not approve of reading aloud a play of Shakespeare's straight through.

He took down the volume containing the "Merchant of Venice," and opened it at the description given by Bassanio of Portia's portrait. Some of the description of her beauty reminded the young lover of his Margaret's perfections. Then, going on to Portia's speech, he read, "She is an unlesioned girl, unschooled, unpractised; happy in this, sir, she is not so old, but she may learn. Happiest of all is, that her gentle spirit commits itself to you to be directed as from her lord, her governor, her king."

"How sweet!" cried Mrs. Seaward.

"How very proper!" responded Mrs. Petrel.

"Such submission!" rejoined Mrs. Seaward.

"Such modesty!" re-echoed her sister.

Margaret was provoked, and laughed provokingly.

"Why do you laugh, Miss Petrel?" asked Mrs. Seaward.

"I was thinking how few folks practised such submission and wifely virtues; and that a man must be very conceited if he believes

that his own judgment is always correct, and expects it to be acted on."

"Then you would expect to have a will of your own?"

"I hope my wishes would influence my husband's will," she said, looking prettily at Cassilis, who gave a loving glance in reply.

When the reading had concluded there came luncheon, and after luncheon Cassilis proposed a walk in the grounds to Margaret, thinking to take her to the cottage he intended for their home.

"I think you are certain to have that girl forced on you as a daughter-in-law; I really pity you, Clarinda," observed Mrs. Petrel.

"The game is not yet played out," replied her sister. "The question of the mother has not been mooted."

Margaret and Cassilis walked together through the shrubberies toward the cottage.

"I hope you will love my mother," he began.

Margaret thought of the proverb, "love me, love my dog," and smiled.

"I will do my best, Cassilis," she said, but she felt rebellious.

"She is so estimable. There is such a beautiful regularity in all the family arrange-

ments. Everything is disposed and carried out on a system. My mother is severe only to the sinful; with the virtuous and well doing she

‘Allures to brighter realms, and leads the way.’

I owe everything to her training, and if my own household be conducted according to her ideas of what is right, I shall be perfectly content.”

“I have no doubt of Mrs. Seaward’s perfections, my dear Cassilis; but to me her greatest consists in the fact that she is your mother.”

“Here is the cottage,” said the young man, turning a corner suddenly, and coming on a charming residence, rich in summer blooms. Margaret gave an exclamation of delight. “It is very stupid, but I have forgotten the key. Ah! no; here it is—hidden under the eaves.” They went over it, followed by a woman whom they found in charge of it, who occupied the back premises.

“This,” said she, “is the bedroom for the master and mistress. Those two are spare bedrooms.”

“This one is the best,” said Margaret, eagerly: “this one shall be for mamma. I dare say she can let the house at Plymouth.”

Cassilis looked dismayed. It was very natural that Margaret should like to have her mother to live with her, but he knew that the point on which the marriage turned was her separation from her mother. His silence chilled the heart of his lady-love. She began to entrench herself immediately.

"I am by no means certain that mamma would like to leave her own house; in that case, we must live with her, or so near that I may see her daily. Dear mamma! I am so uneasy at not hearing from her to-day."

"Margaret," said Cassilis, gravely, "I hope you will be able to find your happiness in my love and society, and in that of my mother. You know, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife;' and of course the converse is equally or even more imperative."

"My dear Cassilis, I have heard that the devil can quote Scripture for his purpose. Do not let me find you imitating his satanic majesty."

She said this with a smiling face, playfully, but with her heart full of bitterness.

Cassilis foresaw a rupture in the future, and clinging in thought to the beautiful girl who stood so near him, he took her hand, and,

drawing her arm within his, pressed it to his side. This caress softened her heart towards him. It was an impulse only on his part. He did not vary from his mother's view of what was right. The separation between Margaret and her mother must be complete if the daughter were to be the wife of Cassilis Forrester.

It is hard for a woman to resist the determination of the man she loves. It is her nature to yield to the opinions of one whom she likes to think her superior in mental power even if he be not. But for some foreboding of misfortune, born of her mother's silence, the girl might have put her hand into that of her lover, and said, "It shall be as you will." As it was, they both avoided the subject on their return towards the house. They spoke of the distant landscape glowing with autumn warmth and autumn fruits; of the coolness of the overhanging branches; of the musical splashing of the fountain, over the troubled waters of which the two young heads bent in their beauty as they passed, and smiled to see the reflection of their faces distorted into laughing deformities in the broadening wavelets.

The lovers were sweet and subdued as they

entered the house. Inly conscious that they had been standing on the brink of a precipice in their tender relations, and had both drawn back in time. In the mind of Cassilis there was the secret dread of the battle yet to be fought. He did not know that they were on the eve of it.

As they were passing through the hall, the dogcart drove up, with her grandfather, Lord Lorimer, and Mr. Seaward. Lord Lorimer caught Margaret's eyes as he entered the hall.

"Miss Petrel," he said, "I called at your uncle's house as we drove through X——, and Mrs. Tyrie gave me a letter which came for you this morning."

Margaret, with a face brimming over with pleasure, rushed to take it from his hand, but her countenance fell when she saw the strange writing, for that of Sally was unfamiliar to her. Lord Lorimer saw, as any observant person would have done, the change of expression. Margaret looked about for some corner wherein to hide herself, whilst she perused what filled her with undefined dread. She thought Louisa had written to say that her mistress was ill—dead, perhaps.

Cassilis was sent by Mrs. Seaward to the housekeeper to get some luncheon ready for

the new comers, and the rest dispersed, except Margaret, who stood in the recess of a window to conceal herself whilst she read; and Lord Lorimer, who, knowing of the absence of Mrs. Petrel from home, feared some mischance had befallen her.

Margaret read, and gave a piteous cry—"Oh, mother! mother!" She turned, and saw Lord Lorimer.

"Oh! Lord Lorimer!" she cried, with a white, scared face, "read that, and tell me how I can get home soonest. Oh, misery! something dreadful has happened. I am a wretch to have stayed away so long. Poor mamma! Read, Lord Lorimer."

"MY DEAR MISS PETREL,

"I am uneasy in my mind; for on getting back I did not find mistress. Louisa says she left home with a few things some days ago, and Louisa said she thought she was gone to see you married, miss, and was with all the rest of the gay folks; but I know you thought she was at home. Louisa says she was very thin and weak when she left, and had not eaten enough scarce to keep her alive since you and I went away; and to be sure, Louisa is nothing of a cook to tempt

her. But I thought it best to let you know mistress is gone, that your young gentleman and Mr. Tyrie, and the rest of them, may find out the truth, and if poor mistress is alive or dead yet.

"And I am your humble servant,

"SARAH TEESDALE."

Lord Lorimer looked perturbed. The idea that Mrs. Petrel, dreading discovery, should have committed suicide, pressed on his mind.

"What can I do, Miss Petrel? Shall I go down to your home, and make inquiries? Shall I consult your grandfather, or your uncle?"

"Oh! I must go home myself, at once. I can inquire best myself. I wonder if they will send me to the railway? What is the nearest? What are the trains?"

Lord Lorimer took a Bradshaw from his pocket.

"If you are bent on going," he said, "I suppose Forrester will accompany you, and will take you to the train in his mother's carriage. Here he is! Forrester, Miss Petrel is uneasy about Mrs. Petrel, and wishes to go home at once. Will you ask for Mrs. Seaward's carriage to take her to the train?"

"Going home! My dear Margaret! Why, you are engaged to remain with my mother till to-morrow. Pray do not go; it will seem to her so very eccentric."

"I cannot help it," replied Margaret, in a low voice, trying to moisten her lips with her dry tongue. "I am uneasy about mamma. I must go. Will you ask Mrs. Seaward to let me have the carriage to catch the train?"

"Pray don't go! It is very unreasonable to be uneasy for nothing," said Cassilis.

"Read that—do you call that nothing?"

Cassilis read, and believing that Mrs. Petrel was only carrying out the plan of absenting herself, which his mother assured him she had recommended in the gentlest terms, thought that Margaret's going home was all nonsense.

"I will ask my mother about the carriage. I believe she wants it herself," he said, at length, after a pause.

He turned away, and Lord Lorimer, looking after him, asked Margaret—

"Are you bent on going? If you will stay, I will go and make all inquiries, and let you know the result."

"You are most kind," replied the girl, looking at him with wonder and gratitude.

"I *must* go myself. If mamma should come

back, I should know it sooner. Oh, dear! I love her more than anybody," she wailed, covering her sobbing face at the thought that a short time since she had believed that Cassilis was to her the dearest person on earth.

Lord Lorimer left the house and mounted his horse, and Margaret went to her room, and threw her articles of dress together, and ringing the bell, she desired the box and bag to be taken to the hall; and there Cassilis, coming to seek Margaret where he had left her, found those signals of departure.

She came down in a few minutes, with a white, determined face, and Cassilis, taking her hand with an air of protesting wisdom, as an elder to a little girl, telling her it is wrong to go out into the rain, said—

"Margaret, my darling! come and speak to my mother—who will ere long be your mother also. She will convince you, from her superior knowledge of facts, that your alarm is utterly unfounded."

Margaret was about to say, "I do not believe it;" but the instincts of politeness made her silent, as she stood irresolute, when a rustle of light grey silk was heard, and Mrs. Seaward, in all the perfection of a faultless toilette, with every hair of her false front

arranged in exquisite precision, entered the hall, and addressed her future daughter-in-law—

“My dear Miss Petrel”—she caught a look from Cassilis, and added, “my dear Margaret, come into my boudoir, and I will explain matters, so that you will see you have no cause for anxiety.”

Margaret followed her in silent incredulity. She had some undefined feeling that Lord Lorimer would provide her with a conveyance. Perhaps she relied on him more from the vagueness of her hope that he would be able to find her mother for her. Cassilis only seemed to think of keeping her here. It was very natural, no doubt, and it was because he loved her so much.

When the two ladies reached the boudoir, Cassilis did not accompany them, except to the door. This was from delicacy, as he knew it would be unpleasant to Margaret to hear her mother reflected on, however gently.

The room overlooked the carriage-sweep of the courtyard, and motioning Margaret to a seat, Mrs. Seaward took the one she had occupied seventeen years before, when, with Cassilis at her knee, she had looked out on “the wicked woman who had stolen the gentleman’s purse.”

She remembered it all, for her grudging appreciation of the beauty of poor Pleasance had fixed the trivial circumstance in her mind. Mr. Seaward had spoken in marvel of that wonderful loveliness which was fair and golden-haired, and in the style which Mrs. Seaward knew to be her own, but very superior.

It seemed too provoking that this woman's daughter, varnished by a kind of spurious respectability by her mother's marriage with a gentleman, should be sitting opposite to her,—a candidate for the honour of marrying her son. True, there was little to remind her of the relationship in Margaret's person. There was no resemblance in the dark flashing face gazing back into hers, with haughty inquiry, to the crouching, miserable creature, with weeping eyes and straggling hair, who sat by the side of the constable on that day so fatal for poor Pleasance. What had made the difference between the mother and the daughter! The good influences of five hundred a year—the competence which put afar temptation. Let us think of this before we judge too severely the erring.

Mrs. Seaward thought only that she would save her son, and keep her word the first for his sake, the second for her own.

She hemmed a little, and began.

"You do not know—you probably have not considered—my dear Miss Petrel" (Cassilis was not present to compel the use of the Christian name) "that there are certain laws in society which are time-honoured and respectable; I may say, necessary. When I wrote to your mother to propose on my son's part to pay his addresses to you, I stipulated that Mrs. Petrel should settle on you and my son the same sum which I pay myself to him, namely, five hundred yearly. I also mentioned that, considering your mother's origin, it would be well that she separated herself from you entirely; and under those circumstances I would agree to the celebration of the marriage at once, to which, knowing the attachment between you and my son, I anticipated no objection." "I have kept my word, and said nothing about the purse," thought Mrs. Seaward, with self-congratulation.

Margaret listened to her with every particle of colour banished from her cheeks; her mouth partly open, and her nostrils distended by her quick breathing.

"You see," added Mrs. Seaward, who felt that she had stunned her victim by a powerful blow, and was now about to prod her with a

pitchfork, to see if she still lived, "I have no doubt your mother has taken the initiative, and has retired into the obscurity from whence your father so injudiciously removed her."

"Tell me one thing, madam," cried Margaret, with a white, trembling lip, "Does Cassilis know of the purport of our conversation?"

"Certainly," replied the lady.

"Would you mind my speaking to him on the subject in your presence?"

Mrs. Seaward answered by ringing the bell.

"Tell Mr. Forrester I wish to speak to him."

Cassilis entered, looking perturbed and anxious.

"Will you kindly reword what you expressed to me, madam?"

"I have been explaining to our dear Margaret," said the lady, "that, considering all the circumstances, she need not be unhappy at Mrs. Petrel's absence. That we had thought it better to make it clear to that person, that no future communication could be held between the wife of Cassilis Seaward and herself, harsh as it might seem; but that you agree with me that such only could be the conditions of your union with her daughter. Probably she has retired into the obscurity from which

Midshipman Petrel in a romantic, boyish freak abstracted her. I have no doubt she will be found to be perfectly well, and that the greatest comfort she could receive would be to hear of her daughter's marriage with a man of position and of future wealth."

"Cassilis! do you agree to all your mother has said? Had you agreed to it previously?"

Cassilis allowed a timid "yes" to slip between the portal of his lips.

"Say it again!" cried Margaret.

"Yes, I do agree," he reiterated more boldly.

"In that case I bid you good-bye; all the love I felt for you seems turned to gall. The admiration I conceived for your character is changed to contempt. I never desire to see you again. You, madam, seem to have invited me here for the purpose of insulting me. Believe this: that I will never live in any house where my dear mother may not be an honoured guest. Gracious heaven, madam! do you and your son imagine that you monopolise all the maternal and filial love in the world? A little—just a little—lives in my heart towards the dearest, tenderest mother who ever reared a child from infancy to womanhood, but that little is in size as much

greater than that I feel for your son, as the world surpasses one of those small, white pearls which encircle your brooch."

She felt that she was speaking with the exaggeration of anger, but she could not bear that either the mother or the son should feel that she suffered in the coming separation. With all her indignation she felt that she loved him still, and she pitied the grief and perplexity that was patent in every look, every gesture. He made matters worse in his self-exculpation.

"Margaret! if you knew all you would see that my mother and I are blameless; that we could not judge nor act in any other way than we have done."

"Blameless! of course you are, both of you. Perfectibility made perfect. 'Ye are the wise of the earth, and wisdom shall die with you.' I am really unfit to be the third in a triangle of two such nonpareils. I feel that I should prefer to take my portion with sinners rather than of such saints. Good morning, madam; good-bye, Cassilis."

"Not good-bye! do not leave me in anger! Oh, my Margaret! my destined wife, I will do anything you wish, even against my own judgment!" he cried, gripping her hand.

"Cassilis!" cried his mother.

"Poor boy!" said Margaret, with infinite tenderness and contempt.

She had seen the hack carriage cross the courtyard, and Lord Lorimer sitting by the coachman on the box. He sprang off, just as Margaret, too angry to wait for the ceremony of the footman opening the door, stood on the step.

"Are you still determined?" Lord Lorimer asked.

"More than ever," she replied.

His lordship caught up the luggage, and handed it to the coachman, and opening the door of the carriage, placed Margaret in it.

"Now you must make room for me," he said to the coachman. "Move that basket to the top of the carriage; the carpet-bag inside."

They started, Margaret too angry to answer the piteous face of entreaty with which Cassilis regarded her.

"What! is she gone?" cried Mrs. Seaward, too happy to believe in the possibility of her son's escape from a *mésalliance*.

Cassilis did not answer. He was anything but triumphant.

"Never mind, my dear boy; she would have blasted your future. Now you may

mate with the aristocracy. Lady Catherine Gravelotte——”

“Mother! mother!” he exclaimed, “I love Margaret. Do you think I can put off my affection like a worn-out garment, or that I am like a beast of the field, without understanding?”

“My dear Cassilis, you have had a lucky escape! She is gone away now with that Lord Lorimer. Yesterday evening, when I thought she was strolling alone in the grounds, she was walking with that man. Wilson saw her as she looked out of her window in the twilight, walking up and down with his lordship, leaning on his arm and looking up in his face, in a manner that shocked her, who is a well-behaved young woman.”

“Nonsense!” cried the young man; “I do not believe a word of it. But she shall not travel down with him alone. I will follow her. Nothing shall stop me,” he cried, looking defiantly at his mother.

He rushed away to the stable and ordered his horse to be saddled, and mounting it, rode at full speed to the railway station in time to see the dark column of steam flying back through the air, and to hear the puff puff of the wheezy engine.

CHAPTER XX.

“I flew to her chamber—’twas lonely,
As if the loved tenant were dead.”

HIS lady-love was gone, and Cassilis, who had been accustomed in every emergency to depend on his mother’s advice, returned to her, shamefaced after his little escapade to the railway, to ask her how he could best retrieve his position with Margaret. Should he follow her? His mother proposed that he should think over it, and ask himself whether he should give up his principles for the sake of his love.

He replied that it seemed hard to him that Margaret should not know the whole truth. It must seem to her unreasonable and unnatural that he should expect her to give up the society of her mother because she was of low birth. She did not know the real reason—that her mother was a felon.

"In that case you had better tell her the truth; you can do so by letter, and offer her the proofs from your stepfather's note-book. No doubt she will see that you have reason on your side, and give way. Were I in your situation I would not expose myself to a personal rebuff till I have made sure my path by a written explanation."

Cassilis determined to abide by his mother's advice, and to make it clear to a daughter that her mother was unfit to associate with her son-in-law and his relatives, just to prove himself to be in the right.

Lord Lorimer took a ticket for Margaret, and fee'd the guard to put her into a lady's carriage. At every station he got out and spoke to her, sometimes offering refreshment, sometimes giving her a newspaper, which he knew she would not care to read; but it accorded with his object, which was to assure her that she had some one at hand interested in her welfare.

At length they reached Plymouth, and Lord Lorimer went on the fly to the esplanade on the cliff, where, weary and with an aching heart, Margaret reached the unwelcoming house. Sally appeared, with a face hope-lighted at hearing the carriage stop, and

seeing some lady coming up the path ; but her face fell when she saw it was Margaret.

"Oh, my dear !" she cried, "I hoped it might be my poor mistress ;" and she threw her apron over her face and turned away.

Lord Lorimer whispered to Margaret to keep up her spirits ; he would return next day and find Mrs. Petrel ; and though Margaret responded, "Oh ! you cannot," the assurance gave her some comfort.

"I am better now you have come back," said Sally. "That Louisa is a girl that has no sense. She says mistress was so ill before she went, and never touched any of the dinners she cooked. She was forced to eat them herself that they might not be wasted. And oh ! Miss Margaret, we did wrong to stay away from that poor dear woman so long. Her eyes were always red with crying, Louisa said, and her face so wan, but she never complained. The doctor's wife, Mrs. Wilkinson, called once, but mistress made an excuse that she was very busy writing letters ; and I think the lady was affronted, for she did not come again, though she said she would, to make as if she was not mortified."

Margaret said little in reply. She was weary, both from the journey and from the

storm of passion through which she had passed. She might have regretted Cassilis, but for the uneasy forebodings of her heart about her mother.

"Oh, mother! mother!" she cried, "if I could but see you sitting there in your place as you used to be, I could defy destiny. How weak and foolish I was to leave you to seek for some unknown happiness in the love of a creature like Cassilis!"

She went to the room which she had occupied with Pleasance, and flung herself on her mother's bed, too weary even to weep.

"I left the substance for a shadow," she felt. "Fool that I was to love any one unselfishly but my mother!"

"I have brought you a nice cup of tea, miss. You may think yourself lucky to have me to look after you; and it breaks my heart to think that you and I both went away, and that girl Louisa never got anything comfortable for poor mistress. It makes me feel so bad that I forget all about having to marry Simon."

Margaret slept some hours, notwithstanding her anxiety—a drowsy sort of insensibility, overridden by images of terror and confusion. Mrs. Seaward, with her cold, sneering face—

Cassilis irresolute—her mother pale, deserted, dying ! She started up and gazed around the empty room, and, restored to bodily strength by rest, wept as if her eyes were fountains of tears. She dressed herself, though it was still too early to find any one downstairs. She would look all about the rooms, she thought, to see if she could find any clue to her mother's retreat. Lord Lorimer had promised to call ; she hoped he would not be late. But no one could be as anxious as she was, she said, with an impatience of his supposed laggard sympathy.

She went down into the little drawing-room. It was painfully neat and unused. The books were all arranged within their shelves. She speculated which had last enjoyed her mother's attention, and took down the copy of "Faust," of which Pleasance had seemed never tired of looking at the outline illustrations. A letter fell at her feet ; it **was** folded, but not addressed, nor concealed in any way from observation, save by the guardianship of the covers of Goëthe's poem.

She read, convulsed with pity and shame. Some tenderness returned towards Cassilis—some respect for his disagreeable mother. They had known all the circumstances, and

had more reason in their shrinking from contact with crime than if her mother had been simply a villager. They had borne all her reproaches, and had not told her that which they knew must give her agony indescribable; but with all, and paramount to all, was love and commiseration for her mother: stricken by the judgment—not unjust, abstractedly—of those who knew the circumstances: giving up her small income—her greatest joy, which Margaret knew consisted in her child's company, without a murmur—kissing the rod which smote her, without a reproach, and with a meek submission to her inevitable fate.

“Ah, mother!” Margaret cried, “other women may be pure, but you are a saint to be worshipped!”

She was reading and re-reading the letter, and striving to guess whither her mother could have departed. The assurance that she did not meditate self-destruction was a comfort, but grief and privation might do the work as surely, though less speedily.

“If I could but find her!—if I could but tell her there is none so dear to me as herself!—that nothing should ever separate us again!” she repeated over and over in a wild way, as if by reiteration she might peal the words

into the heart of the poor absent woman. But it was in vain. Pleasance believed that her child was happy in the company of her future husband, and had kept faith by leaving no trace of herself to direct a search.

At length eight o'clock came, and with it the postman with a letter.

"It must be from mamma," cried Margaret, flying past the slower feet of Sally.

The door was opened, but the letter came from Cassilis. Nothing is so irritating as a letter which does not come from the person whose handwriting you are desirous to see. The one not anticipated is considered an impertinence. Margaret went slowly upstairs, and did not open the letter till she had reperused that of her mother. It was not an intentional slight to Cassilis; it was that all her present thoughts were in another direction. At length she sat at the solitary breakfast-table, and opened her lover's letter:—

"My Margaret," he wrote, "you could not have known the agony you inflicted on me, or you would not have left me as you did this morning. I am sure you will see how much justice we have in what we require of the person of whom you are unhappily the daughter. You must see, my darling, that a stainless woman such as my mother, could not asso-

ciate with one who has felt the contamination of a jail. People would find it out and refuse to visit at our house,—for your mother committed a theft, and was sentenced and punished by a fortnight's imprisonment.

“It is long ago, before you were born, and she has lived, I quite believe, a blameless life since. Still you will admit that our objection to associate with her is well grounded, and not so unreasonable as it must have seemed to you when you believed that your mother's low birth was the only objection to our intercourse. The fact that Pleasance Fern became Mrs. Petrel is but little known, and the seclusion in which she has lived has permitted the ugly facts to drop into partial oblivion. You must see that were your mother again brought into notice, the whole circumstances might be revived, to our shame and confusion. My stepfather was the committing magistrate, so the facts cannot be disputed.

“Do, I pray you, my dearest, accept me on the terms approved by my mother and myself, and make me the happiest man in the three kingdoms.

“Your devoted

“CASSILIS.

“I am sure nothing could make your mo-

ther so happy as the knowledge that you were my wife."

Margaret read, and every feeling of tenderness towards Cassilis turned to gall.

"A mean hound!" she said. "But why should I disgrace a dog by the comparison?"

All the returning affection which had flowed towards him when she thought that he submitted to being considered unjust rather than accuse her mother and make Margaret wretched by the knowledge of her parent's crime, ebbed again at the pitifulness of his statement—the selfishness which inflicted suffering on her rather than be considered in the wrong himself.

"Marry him? *Never!*" she said. "I suppose he will want an answer;" and she wrote him one at once:—

"SIR,—You might have spared me this last insult. My resolution is unchanged, and this must end our communication.

"Your obedient servant,

"MARGARET PETREL."

The letter was finished and directed, when Lord Lorimer was announced. He looked with pity on the tear-stained face of the young girl, but his manner was business-like, and

sitting down opposite her, he asked her who was her mother's trustee, where she had been accustomed to bank, &c., as a preliminary step to making inquiries as to her locality.

"I found a letter from my mother," said Margaret, in a faltering voice. "It has relieved me, partially. She had no idea of——"

Here she stopped with a burst of tears.

"Will you let me see the letter?" he asked, gently.

Margaret shook her head. She could not bear Lord Lorimer should know her mother's shame.

"My dear!" he said, "I know all the circumstances: I learnt them long since from your future stepfather. If I am to help you to find Mrs. Petrel, I must focus every possible light of information on that one point."

Margaret put the letter in his hands, and turned away her sorrowful face whilst he read. When he had finished it, he began and went all over it again. Then, with a voice broken by strong emotion, he said—

"It makes me grind my teeth with rage to think that your future mother-in-law believes herself, and would be believed by the world, to be superior to this matchless woman. Now I will leave you. You do not know why I am so interested in your mother. Your father

saved my life on the evening when he lost his own. Now, good-bye; and may God give you comfort and me success."

"I wish," thought Margaret as the door closed, "I had told him that she was not going to be my mother-in-law."

Lord Lorimer could find out nothing from the sources from which he sought it, namely, the trustee and the bankers. Then he bethought of him of Mr. Seaward, and returned to Abbotsland.

It struck him that Pleasance must have some relatives or friends in her native village, to whom she would be more likely to return than to seek a strange resting-place; he did not know exactly whence young Petrel had taken her, and obtained the information from Mr. Seaward. Before he proceeded further he returned to Plymouth, and sending a note to the small house, he asked if Sally would consent to accompany him in the search for her mistress. As she agreed willingly, he took her on board his yacht, and proceeded on a coasting expedition towards the point where he hoped to hear of Pleasance. His object in taking Sally was from fear that he might find Mrs. Petrel too ill to be moved, and he preferred his yacht as being a easier and more secluded conveyance than the railroad.

CHAPTER XXI.

“I’ve none to smile when I am free,
Or when I sigh to sigh for me.”

PLEASANCE, when she sought the solitude of her native place, because there she should meet no harsh judgments of her past life, had not calculated on the difference between fifteen and thirty-three — between cultivation and ignorance—between the spring of youthful hope and the relaxation of despair. She had food, as much as she cared for, but she had never cared for food sufficiently to take any pains to prepare it for herself. She was content with her neighbour’s potatoes, and with very few of them. Accustomed, however, to nourishment more appetising, and without the stimulus of hope, or the solace of books, her bodily strength failed, and she became every day weaker; she knew it, and was glad. She had promised not to seek self-destruction, but if it came to meet her she could not be to

blame for its welcome. Her strength sank gradually, and her powers of mind with it. Her life fell into a dreamy reverie of the past. She stole down to the beach before sunrise with an expectation of somebody or something, she knew not what. At noon she dragged herself to the cottage of her former friend for the only nourishment she took during the twenty-four hours, and returned to the beach to resume her watching. The boundaries of memory became confused and mingled in the retrospect. Sometimes she looked for Edgar—sometimes she dreamed that Margaret's husband would relent, and that Margaret herself would return to lighten the pangs of her mother's lonely deathbed; but oftener she was a girl again afraid of Mr. Pike, wearied of deferred hope of Edgar's return. Then she would glance at her mourning dress, and be troubled that she had not returned to Mrs. Sibley the frock borrowed for her grandmother's funeral. Sometimes her grandmother to her distempered imagination sat in her accustomed chair in the cottage, when Pleasance climbed up the cliff at night to her solitary home. On these occasions the appearance gave her no concern. She spoke to it, and fancied that it murmured un-

intelligible answers. It did not astonish her that it should be sitting there, or lying down on her bed ; she would regard it wistfully till it faded into darkness. But most of her life was spent on the beach. Her humble friend was as kind to her as the selfishness of poverty permitted. Pleasance paid her liberally for all that she did for her, for she had few claims on her, and believed that her money would last far longer than she should require it ; and that there would be more than enough to pay her funeral expenses. She would have preferred that these should not be incurred, and that the sea should wash away her body ; though it was an idle thought, she trusted that it might be nearer the bones of her Edgar than when confined in a coffin, and laid in the lonely churchyard far away from the moaning sea.

One day as she was sitting as usual on the rocks, her knees supporting her head, lulled into a dreamy forgetfulness by the glare from the water, which she closed her eyes to avoid, her white pocket handkerchief fluttering attracted the attention of Lord Lorimer, whose anxious eyes were ever watching the coast. His glass revealed a figure crouched together in dark clothes, and he came off in a boat at once with Sally.

Pleasance took no notice of the sound of the oars, which had once made her heart dance with joyous expectation.

Sally was landed, and went with tremulous footsteps up the rocks to the place where her mistress was sitting. She opened her eyes, but took no more notice of her faithful servant than of a stranger. Sally, alarmed and agitated, began to cry, and then Pleasance regarded her with concern and astonishment.

"Somebody must be dead," she said, muttering to herself. "I am sorry you are in trouble, madam," she continued; "but I am a poor lone widow—no, not a widow, I forgot. I have some silver for you if you want money."

"You must come with me, dear lady," said Sally.

"Am I to go to prison? I am quite ready—I will not struggle; I am too old and too weak to run away now."

"Oh! what can I do with her, sir?" cried Sally, running back a few paces towards Lord Lorimer, who was following at a little distance not to scare the unhappy object of his solicitude; "she is quite unconscious—she does not know me."

"Come with us in the boat; come home,

Mrs. Petrel," Lord Lorimer said, in a tone of decision."

She obeyed very meekly; and, when seated in the boat, she leaned her head on Sally's shoulder, and kept her eyes closed. The movement was pleasant to her, and lulled her to sleep.

Margaret spent the day in solitary expectation, and understood then for the first time what were the terrible feelings of loneliness which had constituted the life of her mother during her absence. She had no tender remembrances of Cassilis. He had been the ignis fatuus which had led her from home into trouble and pain—pain and trouble which had fallen upon her mother.

She felt no relentings towards him: he was too clearly a reflex of the stronger managing mind of the mother; and a woman can least tolerate feebleness of character, which probably may be her own feminine attribute.

She was glad when the dinner hour arrived, and was angry and astonished at finding it badly cooked. She abused Louisa in a manner which filled with dismay the beloved of the baker's boy, and that young creature told him when they met that her young mistress had a

fine spirit of her own. The old mistress never complained when the meat was not quite cooked, and the vegetables cold.

"No wonder poor mamma grew thin and ill."

Then the evening had to be got through somehow ; but expectation would not let her settle to any occupation. She sat on to eleven at night, and told herself that there was no more hope till to-morrow.

The sounds of life died away on the causeway : the cabs had gone off their stands ; there were but one or two occasional passengers moving into sight under the gas lamps.

Margaret had calculated the time that a carriage would take to come from the station, and knew that the last train could have brought no news of her mother, or it would have reached the small house sooner.

At eleven o'clock, therefore, she left the room, and was going to bed, when she heard a quick footstep on the gravel, followed by an impatient knock and ring at the door. In an instant she had opened it herself, and saw Lord Lorimer's troubled face.

"They are bringing her up," he said ; "take my advice, and do not show yourself to-night, but let her servant attend to her. Let her

think that nothing has occurred unusual, and to-morrow appear, if possible, in a dress which is familiar to her eyes, and talk without emotion, the exhibition of which may distract her hopelessly."

Margaret obeyed, and stood back with an aching heart whilst Pleasance was supported upstairs by Sally. Then Margaret held out her hand to Lord Lorimer, and thanked him gratefully, after which he disappeared into the shadows, and returned to his yacht.

Pleasance consented to be undressed, and put into the bed which had been prepared for Margaret without any resistance, or any expression of satisfaction. Then Sally made Louisa bring the tea things, and gave to Pleasance a cup such as she had been accustomed to have in former times. The servant, when her mistress was asleep, advised Margaret to occupy the smaller bed as usual by her mother's side that she might fancy time had stood still, and her child had never left her.

As soon as it was light, Pleasance, accustomed to watch the sunrise from the rocks at Vedra, arose and dressed herself; but, seeing Margaret asleep by her side, her mind became more confused, and she went down-

stairs to look for her friend, Mrs. Heathdale, and not finding her she returned to her bedroom, and was about to awaken Margaret to make inquiries ; but a loving instinct lest she should not have slept sufficiently long enough withheld her.

Then an intense sense of happiness stole over her, like a soft dew from heaven on a thirsty land made barren by drought. Margaret was there—was with her mother ; she knew not how or why. There she lay with her dark, silky hair—her mouth just opening,—her cheek glowing with the warmth of sleep. By-and-by she would awake and speak to her. Mrs. Heathdale was dead—she remembered now—but she had Margaret : her blessing—her joy—her pride. She knelt, and kissed the white foot that had freed itself of the sheet, and then she offered an incoherent prayer to heaven for her child's welfare and happiness ; and calmed by this effort of devotion she slept again by Margaret's side, with one thin hand on the girl's arm lest she should lose the sense of her presence, and Margaret might escape whilst she slept.

Care and nursing and good food restored the lovely frame of Pleasance, and with it her mental balance.

She saw Margaret not moody and anxious and disquieted, as she had been after her first knowledge of Cassilis till her leaving home for her aunt's residence, but in cheerful spirits, returning to all her former occupations, and striving to make up to her mother for the days of bitterness and nights of tears which Margaret's absence had entailed on her.

She never mentioned Cassilis, and Pleasance's joy was sometimes dashed by the reflection that a separation might yet be impending. One day she summoned courage to ask if Margaret were going to marry, and when. The girl replied, gaily, that she had not liked Cassilis on better acquaintance sufficiently well to marry him—that she had expressed thus much to him, and the engagement was terminated.

Her mother held her hand tight, and looked into her face to try and discover some lingering regret; but there was none.

"No, my mother; my love for that handsome youth was one of those 'tares of haste,' which withered like the stem of Jonah's gourd. I should have been a miserable woman had I married him."

"But you must marry some time or other, Margaret," said the mother, sadly.

"I do not see the necessity," said the daughter, smiling. "At any event, I need not be in a hurry: time has not thinned my flowing hair, nor sickness bent me with its iron hand."

Then she showed Pleasance the beautiful ornament which her kind uncle had given her, and wrote a letter full of gratitude to her aunt for the hospitality and affection with which she had been treated by her and by Mr. Tyrie.

Mrs. Tyrie wrote back a letter of congratulation:—

"My dear niece," she said, "I knew you never could get on with that intolerable prig, Cassilis Forrester. Now you are wiser, and I hope you may soon be in the mind to 'thank God, fasting, for a good man's love.' You know the good man to whom I allude: he has no one now to sing duets with him. I told him yesterday that your engagement with Cassilis Forrester was broken off, and he said, gravely, that he was very sorry—Mr. Forrester was much to be pitied, &c. ; and all the rest of the evening he was bursting into insane fits of laughing, at things which in others scarcely provoked a smile.

"Do not flatter yourself that Cassilis will long wear the willow. His mother is very busy scheming to bring about a match between her son and a lady who has no charms but her title.

"You will be glad to hear that your poor namesake and her husband are forgiven, and are now staying at the Rectory of Birchland. Strange to say, your grandfather likes his son-in-law cordially, and I think the feeling is reciprocal, though the proverb about an affection under such circumstances being as rare as a tortoiseshell tom-cat, is generally a true one. I am not clear that Jack is quite to my stepmother's taste, but she has adopted him, and declares that he is exceedingly clever, which is probably the case.

"When your mamma can spare you, Hal and I shall be delighted to have you back. Edgar sent his love in his last letter to you and to Mrs. Petrel.

"Your affectionate aunt,

"MARY TYRIE."

"Do you want to go!" Pleasance asked, with a look of terror stealing over her.

"Oh! no; I had much rather not," replied the daughter.

Their days passed very peaceably. The broken-off marriage was the subject of some observation, but it was swamped in the greater interest of Jack Knight's runaway match, and the dreadful infliction on his parents of an unchosen daughter-in-law. The condolences to the parents were profuse from their friends, till they found that Margaret Petrel would inherit her stepmother's fortune at her death, and have a fair income during her lifetime ; when, having thrown away their sympathy for the supposed misfortune, they had none to give for the prosperity of the young couple.

Margaret and her mother often spoke of Lord Lorimer to each other, and wished to see him again. They wondered why he did not come, and his absence was a little mortification to Margaret. He had gone away speaking of her future mother-in-law. He believed that she was going to marry Cassilis, after all. She felt that she must stand low in his opinion if that were his impression, but the two women could do nothing ; they could only rest and be thankful in their re-union.

"Do not think I regret Cassilis Forrester, my dear mother," she said, in answer to her mother's inquiring eyes one day, when the *Court Journal* spoke of his intended marriage.

"It seems to me that Rosamonds and purple jars belong to every age. I found out the valueless nature of my purple jar before it came into my possession, and in this I was happier than she was."

When the storms of autumn made themselves heard Lord Lorimer returned from his cruise in the Mediterranean, and came to visit the ladies.

"How am I to address you?" he said.
"Are you Miss Petrel or Mrs. Forrester?"

Margaret said she had not changed her name. He shook hands with her cordially, but gave all his attention to her mother. This was the case whenever he called. He never seemed to know when Margaret left the room or returned to it. Pleasance seemed the greatest—almost the only—object of interest to him. He encouraged the expression of her opinions, and taught her to confide in him as a valued and disinterested friend. The tie between them was rivetted by gratitude on his part for his life rescued by her husband, and on hers by the conviction that, knowing all the circumstances of her past life, he loved and revered her nevertheless.

"I shall go out," said Margaret, one day.
"Lord Lorimer said he was coming, and I

never can get a word from either of you when he comes."

"I think he is attached to you, my dear child!"

"He has a strange way of showing it, then," she replied, with some degree of pique: "all his attention, all his conversation, is directed to you."

"Still waters run deep," said her mother. "He knows that he has neither the youth nor the personal beauty of the man you loved, and probably he fears a refusal."

"I think Lord Lorimer a far finer character than Cassilis Forrester," said the girl. "Cassilis is like those beautiful little model dogs which cannot stand unless bolstered up by support from others."

"Ah! Margaret, you are spiteful because he has consoled himself with some one else."

Margaret passed Lord Lorimer on the stairs with a saucy smile.

"You are very attentive to my mother," she said.

"I prefer her to nearly every woman with whom I am acquainted," he said, gravely.

"Your daughter laughs at me," he said. "I shall not come again."

"I think you misunderstand her feelings towards you," said Pleasance.

On that hint he spoke, and won Margaret for his wife.

There was no question now of separation between the mother and the child.

"I have two seats," he told them, "and you two women shall choose which you prefer, in which to begin housekeeping. I have never lived up to my income, but I should like my wife to adorn the station to which my rank entitles her. I mean to give an entertainment which shall throw into the shade every other ever given in the county, and invite all the world and his wife. Folks have never given me credit for wealth, of which my banker and stockbroker only have been aware, but now I can spend without dread of embarrassment. Margaret, you shall have my mother's diamonds and emeralds reset. You will look magnificent, my lady."

When they were alone for a few minutes, Margaret suggested, with a troubled brow, that perhaps her mother's presence would prevent the acceptances by ladies of the invitations.

Lord Lorimer patted her velvet cheek, and laughed scornfully.

"Society, my dear child, can make distinctions. It oppresses the weak ; it bows down before wealth and rank. We shall have many more guests than we care to entertain. The

men will come where there are good dinners and good wine ; the women will always follow the men."

He had his way; and though Mrs. Petrel was known to be living with the newly-married couple, and some folks said she had been quite of low origin and imprisoned for theft, yet really it was no affair of theirs. She was perhaps a kleptomaniac. All the world was going. It would be the most splendid entertainment ever known in the county. All the great people in London were said to be coming. Mrs. Seaward was in the greatest perplexity. She could not accept Lady Lorimer's invitation without stultifying all that she had previously said ; but to her dismay, her son's betrothed, who had not received a card, insisted on their procuring her one, without which concession she threatened a quarrel. So Mrs. Seaward wrote a fawning note to Margaret, and said that she trusted that all unkindness would be buried in the past—and—would Lady Lorimer kindly send a ticket to her friend, without which the happiness of her dear son Cassilis would be incomplete.

Pleasance looked lovely in the rich black silk, which colour of widowhood she never put aside. She could scarcely be credited at being

thirty-four, the mother of a lady so tall and stately as Margaret, and so unlike the timid beauty of her parent. She appeared on that occasion to please her son-in-law, but she was happier in the retirement of his magnificent grounds and luxuriant and well-kept flower-gardens.

Years went on, and Pleasance returned occasionally with Margaret to the small house on the esplanade. The last time she was seen she was walking by the side of a perambulator, in which was the rosy-faced boy who was to be the future lord. He was called Edgar, and his grandmother doted on him.

Pleasance did not forget her earliest friend, and invested the remains of Mrs. Heathdale's legacy to give her an annuity for the rest of her life.

I have not found men generally inconsolable for the loss of the objects of their attachment. Mr. Franklin has his eye on the eldest daughter of Mrs. Tyrie, who is to be introduced next year.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 55 line 7, *for* "rimbomba," *read* "rimbombo."

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